

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA

EPIGRAPHIA INDICA

ARABIC AND PERSIAN SUPPLEMENT

(In continuation of the Series Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica)

1973

EDITED BY
DR. Z. A. DESAI
Director (Epigraphy)



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EPIGRAPHIA INDICA

ARABIC AND PERSIAN SUPPLEMENT

1973

EPITAPH OF KHWAJA MUBASHSHAR, ATTENDANT OF HADRAT NIZAMUD-DIN AULIYA OF DELHI

BY DR Z A DESAI

Delhi, the capital of India for about a millenium, is the necropolis of a large number of Muslim elite as well as laymen—kings, noblemen, officials, saints, savants, litterateur, artists, artisans and the like. But the last resting place in the case of a large number of them has remained unknown or unmarked. The monumental as well as sepulchral remains of most of them including monarchs and high officials—and these must have been in sufficient number—no longer exist, having fallen prey as much, if not more, to ravages of Time as perhaps to pressure on land due to such factors as rapid urban growth of population (bringing in its wake increasing civic and like needs), ever growing industrialisation and the usual land-greed of the general public, further, the normal pressure on land was accentuated by the unprecedented influx of humanity from across the newly created border, on the eve of and after Indian Independence in 1948 and rise of population during the past three decades.

Mercifully, however, considerable portion of Delhi's present residential quarter, the Basti Nizamud-Din, named after the celebrated saint and savant, Sultānu'l-Mashā'ikh Haqrat Nizamud-Din Auliya (d. A.H. 725/1325 A.D.), despite the upheavals and vicissitudes the Indian metropolis has seen during the past six centuries and a half (and even greater ones during the last three decades) has remained more or less unaffected by the rapidly changing topography of the city which has transformed the outside-Shahjahanabad (Old Delhi) localities or villages and hamlets on the periphery which once formed part of the seven cities of Delhi at one time or the other (except what we may now call 'old' New Delhi which had replaced half a century earlier other old places), beyond recognition. As a result, the landmarks of the area particularly in and around the precincts of the Dargah of the Saint, as were seen, noted and described first more than a century ago¹ and later on, systematically, more than half a century back² (when quite a good deal of the ruins of the various successive cities that formed the Indian metropolis throughout most of the first half of the current millenium had survived but are, alas, now no more) are even to-day easily recognisable, and can be pin-pointed without much difficulty or fear of error, thanks obviously to the restraining influence of the Saint's personality, as lasting after his demise as it was in his life-time.

¹ Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Ātharu'l-Shanādāt* (Delhi, 1854), pp. 28, 30, 33, 36, 57, 58, 62, 100, etc., Carr Stephen, *Archaeology and Monumental Remains of Delhi* (Simla, 1876, Reprint Allahabad, 1967), pp. 102-21.

² *List of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments in Delhi Province (LMH)*, vol II (Calcutta, 1919), pp. 137-80, Maulavi Zafar Hasan, *A Guide to Nizamud Din*, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 10 (Calcutta, 1922), Maulavi Bashirud Din Ahmad, *Waqi at t-Daru'l-Hukumat-i-Dihli*, part II (Delhi, 1919), pp. 746-876.

It is therefore somewhat paradoxical and inexplicable that there should not have come down to us a proper if not detailed architectural history of the Dargah complex during the centuries following the Saint's demise—no worthwhile authentic literary evidence, epigraphical document or architectural monument that might have provided some idea of the gradual building complex of the Saint's Dargah proper and its immediate environs¹ is available. This is rather surprising when we remember that the Saint has been throughout held in great reverence and his last resting-place has been the focus of visit, all around the year, by a large number of people, and during the 'Urs (Death-Anniversary) days, by thousands-strong throngs of humanity from far and wide for spiritual solace and blessings, uninterruptedly to the present day. The present building of the Saint's Tomb dates centuries after his death, which fact has been attributed to his aversion, and rightly so, to an earthly monument over his remains. The only early monument in the precincts is the building to its immediate west, called Jama'at-Khana which, though undated, is, as is undoubtedly proved on architectural grounds, a contemporary structure and hence may be safely taken to represent the earliest complete building of the entire quarter.² But it has also no recorded history in the form of an inscription or even a contemporary or not much later literary reference. The earliest epigraphical records, in the entire Basti so far known (except the one dated A H 781/1379 80 A D) occurring on the arcaded building abutting on the southern side of the Baoli (Step-well)³ situated to the north of the Tomb and entered from the northern gateway of the Dargah, are those that appear on the Tomb of the Saint's favourite disciple and by far the greatest Persian poet India has produced, Amir Khusraw Dihlavi (d A H 725/1325 A D)—these however, date as late as from A H 935 37 (1528 30 A D).⁴

But very recently, an outstanding epigraphical discovery was made by the Persian and Arabic inscriptions Section of the Epigraphy Branch of the Archaeological Survey of India stationed at Nagpur. To be exact, in 1976, an inscription was found engraved on a sarcophagus (tombstone), situated outside the premises of the Dargah proper, in the area called Chabūṭara i Yaran (lit. Platform of the Companions) by Shri M F Khan, then Senior Epigraphical Assistant and now Deputy Superintending Epigraphist for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions, Archaeological Survey of India, Nagpur. Its momentous significance was revealed only when on seeing its impression in the normal course of our work, I deciphered its correct purport to indicate that it refers to the demise of Khwaja Mubashshar, a life-long personal attendant (Khadim) of the Saint.

¹ The only dated monument which lies just within the village walls to the south east of the Dargah complex is the Kālī Masjid, constructed according to its inscription in A H 772 (1370 71 A D) by Junanashah Maqbūl entitled Khān i Jahān son of Khan-i-Jahān Tilangani (for details, see *LMH* pp 178 79, Zafar Hasan *op cit*, pp 35-36). Another undated but very important monument assignable to the same period on architectural grounds is the Tomb ascribed to Khan i Jahān Tilangani Firuz Tughluq's Prime Minister who is traditionally related to have been a disciple of the Saint but was in fact that of the latter's spiritual successor Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh-i-Dihli (for its description, see *LMH* p 180 Zafar Hasan *op cit*, pp 37 38). This building, architecturally an extremely important monument in that it blazed a new trail in India in the design of Tomb-architecture which culminated through a series of octagonal Sayyid and Lodi Tombs into the magnificent Sher Shah's Tomb at Sassaram in Bihar, today lies in a hopelessly uncared for condition and is used what is worse, as a residence. It is feared that this pioneer tomb-building will be lost to posterity for ever if its proper maintenance is not immediately ensured. There is still another building locally known as Lal Mahal which is assigned by some to the time of Ghiyathuddin Balban (1265 1287 A D) and identified with his Kusk i Lal and by others to the time of Alauddin Khalji (for its description, see *LMH* pp 137 38, Zafar Hasan, *op cit*, p 35).

² *LMH*, pp 151 52, Zafar Hasan, *op cit* pp 14-15

³ *LMH*, p 145 Zafar Hasan, *op cit* p 9

⁴ For a description of the poet's Tomb and its inscriptions, see *LMH*, pp 160 65, Zafar Hasan *op cit* pp 22 29, *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica* 1915 16, pp 3 9, plates I (a), (b), (c) II III

It may be pointed out that the sarcophagus or gravestone, on the footside of which this short record of two Persian couplets is engraved in relief, is not in a corner or some such out-of-way place as to be missed by the residents of the locality or at least by the watchful eyes of an explorer of historical antiquarian and archaeological objects like Maulavi (later Khan Bahadur) Zafar Hasan (then Assistant Superintendent in the Archaeological Survey of India,¹ who surveyed and described all the worthwhile places of Delhi Province including those of this locality giving their complete history inscriptions information about their present condition and ownership and other necessary particulars) or by one not only interested in the identification of places of antiquarian and cultural interest in the locality but also associated, as a direct descendant or in some way or the other with the Saint like Khwaja Hasan Nizami. It is therefore not understood how this inscription remained unnoticed and unknown so far.

The inscribed sarcophagus covers the mortal remains of Khwaja Taqiu d-Din Nuh the sister's son of the Saint, which is situated in a small open enclosure hemmed in by a row of modest residential houses at the rear of the famous Tomb of Shamsu d-Din Ataga Khan and separated from its northern enclosure-wall by the narrow lane that branches off westwards towards the Baoli Hadrat Nizam u d-Din from the road going northwards from the present Qhalib Academy towards the Lal Mahal to meet the road to the main (i.e. northern) entrance of the Dargah enclosure. The entire area between the Baoli and the above mentioned road is stated to be the necropolis of Yaran-i-Chabūṭara (i.e. companions) of the Saint. The grave-platform is hardly a couple of metres towards north east from Ataga Khan's Tomb as those familiar with the topography of the area will be aware this site is at some distance to the east south east of the enclosure (situated on an elevation, on the eastern bank of the said Baoli), believed to be the cemetery of the Kirmanī family to which Sayyid Mubarak, known as Amir Khurd, author of the famous hagiological work *Siyaru l-Auliā* belonged.

On the other hand the last resting-place of Khwaja Mubashshar, whose epitaph is being published here is shown in close proximity of the Saint's mausoleum, in the small red sandstone enclosure immediately to the west of Amir Khusraw's Tomb². His son Khwaja Nuru d-Din and a few other contemporaries are also believed to have been buried here and in close proximity.

According to old residents of the area, the level of the ground around the present grave of Khwaja Taqiu d-Din Nuh itself is not what it was about half a century back. It was raised to the present level in about 1928 by the late Khwaja Hasan Nizami, whose versatility and varied interests included among other things, quest and care for antiquarian objects and who had a

¹ Khan Bahadur Maulavi Zafar Hasan who hailed from Meerut and had made Delhi his home later on rose to be the Deputy Director General Archaeological Survey of India. New Delhi and after his migration in extremely dire circumstances (there are still people in Delhi who remember to have seen him bare headed and bare footed in the Purana Qila Transit Camp during the holocaust of the partition of the country) to Pakistan in 1947 he became the Director General Department of Archaeology there. He maintained his keen interest in historical and archaeological studies even after his retirement until his death (almost unreported and un lamented in India) a few years ago in Lahore where he had settled down. To his hard work and labour the Indian educated public at large and Dehliites in particular are indebted for the excellent List of Hindu and Muhammadan Monuments in the Delhi Province an exhaustive record of his survey of remains of architectural or antiquarian interest in and around Delhi made during the second decade of the present century. Apart from his other equally laudable services this very monumental List published in four volumes of text and one Supplement (to Volume I) of illustrations has surely earned him lasting fame. It is therefore sad that the people of Delhi and particularly old Delhi which he had made his home should be so indifferent (one is tempted to say callous) to the memory of their erstwhile great fellow-citizen. It is hoped that some old resident of Delhi—there are still many people alive in Delhi who have seen and known him—will repay as sort of *Fard i Kifāya* the debt by publicly acknowledging his services in some form or other.

² *LMH* p. 170

natural passion and inborn love, in particular, for persons personalities, things, buildings and in short everything associated with Hadrat Nizamu d-Din Auliya (through whose sister he claimed descent) as a token of which he took upon himself the very desirable task of identifying various tombs and graves in the Dargah precincts ¹ Inexplicably he too missed this sepulchral inscription when he not only himself got the inscribed tombstone set up in its present place and level but also identified the grave as that of the sister's son of the Saint, *vide* the notice inscribed in black ink on the red sandstone slab set up by him in A H 1347 (20 June 1928 to 8 June 1929), which reads as under —

- ۱ مرار حصرت سد بی الدن نوح رص
- ۲ حصرت سلطان المساح حواحه نظام الدن اولیا کے سگے بھائی تھے
- ۳ عالم اور حافظ قرآن بھی تھے بہ خوبصورت تھے جمعہ کی رات کو ہمسہ انک
- ۴ قرآن حم کرتے تھے سلطان المساح نے انکو اسی زندگی میں اپنا حاشی
- ۵ بنانا بھا اٹھارہ سال کی عمر میں مرض دو اسعال کیا سلطان المشاح
- ۶ نے ان کے عم میں جو مہرے بسم نہ کیا انے ہاتھوں سے انکی سب دوں کی
- ۷ اور فرمانا اے خاک انے نورجسم کو سرے آعوش میں دنا ہوں سد ۷۱۷ھ
- ۸ میں اسعال کیا
- ۹ سد ۷۱۷ھ میں حسن نظامی نے کسہ لگانا

(1) The Tomb of Hadrat Sayyid Taqī'u'd-Dīn Nūh, may Allah be pleased with him

(2) He was the real nephew (sister's son) of Hadrat Sultanu'l-Mashā'ikh (lit Prince of the saintly personages), Khwaja Nizamu d-Din Auliya

(3-8) He was well-versed in (different branches of) learning and was (also) a *Hāfiz* of (i.e. one who has committed to memory the entire) *Qur ān*. He was very handsome. He always used to recite in one sitting the entire *Qur ān* during Friday nights. The Sultanu'l-Mashā'ikh had, during his own life-time appointed him his (spiritual) successor. He died of tuberculosis at the (very young) age of eighteen.

The Sultanu'l-Mashā'ikh was so much grieved (at his demise) that he did not even smile for six months. He lowered his dead body with his own hands in the grave, saying, 'O earth, I am assigning the light of my eyes to your bosom.' He died in A H 717 ²

(9) The inscription was set up in A H 1347³ by Hasan Nizami ⁴

The colour of the sarcophagus for the identification of which the above notice was set up cannot be made out due to successive heavy coats of whitewash given to it. Its foot side face is engraved with a perfectly legible two line inscription in Persian verse ⁵ which contained the obituary of Khwaja Mubashshar, the favourite personal attendant (*Khādim*)⁶ and confidant of the Saint. In other words, the inscribed tombstone, if *in situ*, would indicate the grave to be not that of Khwaja Taqī'u'd-Dīn Nūh but of Khwaja Mubashshar.

¹ It is likely that the idea occurred to Khwaja Şahib when Maulavi Zafar Hasan was busy surveying the area more than a decade and a half earlier.

² A.H. 717 started on 16th March 1317 and ended on 4th March 1318.

³ A.H. 1347 started on 20th June 1928 and ended on 8th June 1929.

⁴ This account seems to be based mainly on Amīr Khurd *Siyarū l Auliya* (Delhi 1876) p. 204.

⁵ *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1975-76 No. D 76.

⁶ These *Khādims* were not just ordinary servants but were like Stewards, Major Domos or Personal Assistants and Secretaries of our days.

This new epigraphical discovery thus poses a serious and tricky problem, as it would necessitate the determination of the actual grave of two personalities closely associated with the Saint, one of whom Khwaja Taqī'd Dīn Nūh, had a greater claim to his affection being a blood relation, whereas the other, Khwaja Mubashshar, had not only served the Saint as his personal attendant but was also brought up by him from childhood like a son (though to the general public he is almost unknown). Hence, it is essential to correctly identify the inscribed tombstone in question so that there is no room for any unnecessary misunderstanding.

This problem would normally not have arisen had there been no question about the tombstone being *in situ*. And there is a general belief that it is *not* in its original place. In the course of my on-the-spot queries, a responsible and perhaps the oldest octogenarian resident of the locality, Mr. Nizhar 'Alī son in law of the late Khwaja Hasan Nizami, emphatically asserted that the grave marked by the tombstone in question belongs to none other but Khwaja Taqī'd Dīn Nuh and that the sarcophagus itself was brought from the present grave of Khwaja Mubashshar situated near the Tomb of Amir Khusraw in the late twenties, a fact to which he claims to have been an eye-witness. On the other hand, Mr. Ibn-i-Arabi (brother-in-law of Khwaja Hasan Nizami, who was brought up from his very childhood by the latter and who in turn helped him in many ways), also an eye-witness, was inclined to discredit this view and said in the presence of Mr. Nizhar 'Alī that as far as he could recollect, there was no shifting of the sarcophagus. According to him, the grave which was then at a much lower level—about three metres below the present level—was covered by the present sarcophagus and it was raised to the present level by the late Khwaja Sahib, Mr. Nizhar 'Alī also attested to the raising of the level.

Now, there being, on the face of it, no apparent reason for it, one would find it difficult to believe that the sarcophagus in question is not *in situ* and was shifted to the present site from its original position some time in the past. It may be argued that it is inconceivable that the heavy tombstone, which must require a number of able-bodied strong men to lift, leave alone carry, could have been transported to this distance for no apparent or compelling reason, also that if the old grave here had no sarcophagus, it would have been perhaps easier to construct a new one, of brick and mortar or make one of stone, then again, there was absolutely no need of (and would have, very probably, even invited some compunction against) removing the sarcophagus marking one grave (namely that of Khwaja Mubashshar or someone else) to be used for marking another grave (namely that of Khwaja Taqī'd-Dīn Nūh). One may therefore be tempted to conclude that there may be some slip of memory on the part of Mr. Nizhar 'Alī in a matter that happened half a century ago and therefore, the inscribed sarcophagus may after all be *in situ*.

Against this, another elderly Pirzada, Sayyid Zuhūr Hasan, contacted separately and at a later date, also spoke of having been a witness to the shifting. According to him, the sarcophagus in question was lying loose along with a couple more, in the enclosure of Khwaja Mubashshar's grave to which it belonged, and this was utilised by late Khwaja Hasan Nizami. Added to this is another weighty fact—according to all accounts, the Saint's nephew was buried in the Chabūtara-i-Yaran¹. Lastly, there is quite a strong corroborative evidence in a statement of Amir Khurid that 'the companions (*jārān*) and the attendants (*Khadīmān*) were buried at the feet (*pāyān*) of the Saint'. This would indicate that Khwaja Mubashshar was also buried at the place where his grave is at present shown.

This seemingly discrepant situation has to be satisfactorily explained. The dictates of reason should locate the grave of the Saint's favourite nephew somewhere in the immediate neighbourhood of the Saint's own last resting-place, but then Khwaja Nūh had died before

¹ For example Amir Khurid *op cit*, p. 204.

the Saint at a time when the Saint's own burial-place was not selected And as stated above, Khwaja Nūh was interred in the Chabutara-ı Yaran, that is in the area where his grave is at present shown On the other hand, it is only reasonable that Khwaja Mubashshar and other attendants, disciples and admirers who survived the saint (like Amīr Khusraw, Diya'u'd Dīn Barāmī and the like) were buried in the proximity of the Saint's Tomb

Personally, I feel that there is sufficient weight in this argument and in the evidence of Mr Nithar 'Alī and Mr Zuhūr Hasan,¹ and therefore, until something turns up to the contrary we should accept that the tombstone in question belongs to the grave of Khwaja Mubashshar situated next to that of Amīr Khusraw

Coming to the study proper of the epitaph, this outstanding epigraphical discovery, apart from providing the earliest dated record of the entire complex, also furnishes the year of the death of Khwaja Mubashshar, which was so far not known from any recorded source, and also speaks, despite the brevity of the text, of the devotional love he held towards his Master (under whose paternal care, as will be mentioned presently, he was brought up from his very childhood) That the Khwaja must have pined for union with the Saint all through the two years by which he had outlived him is quite clear from the epigraph the brief text refers to his 'having left this world to gird up his loins once again in the service of his saintly Master Surprisingly again, despite the brevity, the inscription provides one more interesting piece of information It speaks of Khwaja Mubashshar as 'the man of Reality' (*ahl-i mānī*, i.e. a man of spiritual powers—in the text) and as 'one whose face was, to the people of the world, like the resplendant full moon (*badr-i-munir*)' This is evidently intended to convey the fact that Khwaja Mubashshar was endowed with as much, if not more, personal charm and handsomeness, as the spiritual degrees he must have acquired through his life-long constant association with the Saint

This is thus a very important record, which furnishes not only new valuable information but is also the only early record—again a metrical one—found in the locality

The text comprises a small Fragment (*Qit'a*) of two verses in Persian, composed in a somewhat uncommon metre, viz the *Bahr-ı Khafif Musaddas Makhbūn Muṣṣa'a'ath Maqsūr*² It is inscribed in *Naskh* letters The style of writing, while of no particular merit, is not entirely devoid of quality either It conforms to the calligraphical style of the inscriptions of the period

The text occupies a writing space of about 76 by 14 cm and has been deciphered as under —

TEXT

Plate I (a)

روشن بر خلق همچو درمیر	۱ اهل معی مسر مرحوم
که کمر بست نار خدمت پیر	۲ هفتصد بست هفت بد نارنج

TRANSLATION

(1) The man of Reality, Mubashshar, the one taken into the mercy of Allah, whose countenance was, to the people of the world, like resplendant full moon—

¹ Unfortunately, despite efforts, I could not lay my hands on the published Diary of Khwaja Sahib for the years 1928-1929 which may contain an entry in regard to the setting up of the tombstone This could perhaps clear up the matter

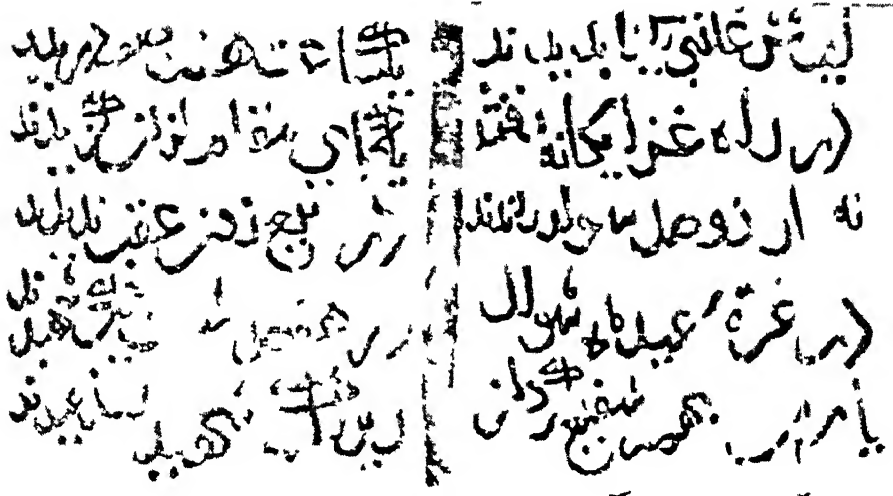
² It is the same metre in which the famous Sufistic poem *Hada iqu l Haqiqat* of the celebrated 12th century Persian Sufi poet, Hakim Sanā'i of Ghazna is composed

(a) Epitaph of Khwaja Mubashshar, dated A H 727, Delhi (p 6)

SCALE 19

INSCRIPTIONS FROM BARI KHĀṬU

(b) Epitaph of six Martyrs, dated A H 761 (p 11)



SCALE 16

(c) Epitaph of 'Ādilshah (p 12)



SCALE 35

(d) Epitaph of 'Ilmu'd-Dīn (p 13)



SCALE 5

(2) the date was seven hundred (and) twentyseven (A H 727- 1326 27 A D) when he girded up his loins once again in the service of his spiritual Guide

As in the case of a vast number of noted personalities of their time, very little is known about Khwaja Mubashshar's life. Though as a constant companion of the Saint, attending upon the latter since his very childhood, he does find sporadic mention in the *Malfūz* of the Saint himself and of his successors like Hadrat Shaikh Na'iru d-Din Mahmūd Chiragh-i-Dihli and Khwaja Sayyid Muhammad Husaini Gaisū Daraz of Gulbarga and later hagiological works, very little is known about him. It would not be wrong to say that we are totally in dark about even the barest particulars of his life. For example, nothing is known about his antecedents, his native place, date and place of birth, family background (even the names of his parents are not known) etc., from available hagiological or historical works. Inquiries with different knowledgeable persons associated with the Saint's Dargah and Khanqah also drew more or less a blank. Whatever information could be gathered from these sources amounts to this that Khwaja Mubashshar was an adopted son (*mutabannā*) of the Saint,¹ had left a number of sons and daughters, the eldest of whom was Khwaja Nūru'd Dīn,² his descendants had gone to Burhanpur (founded and named after an eminent disciple of the Saint and a companion of Khwaja Mubashshar, Hadrat Burhanu'd-Din Gharib, by the Khandesh ruler) and thence at a later date had settled down in the village Rauza (present day Khuldabad) where Hadrat Burhanu d-Din lies buried. Khwaja Mubashshar's descendants have had a share until recently in the offerings to the Tomb of the Saint, but at present there is no survivor there, though their turn (*hāri*) in attendance and collection of the share is still reserved.

The above particulars, inadequate as they are, do not add to our knowledge. They conform to what is known about Khwaja Mubashshar from literary sources. The information from the hagiological works likewise does not amount to much but do furnish some more particulars about him and may be summarised here. The author of the *Siyarū I Auliya*, Amir Khurd, furnishes a very interesting piece of information, namely that in the early days, Khwaja Mubashshar and his own father Sayyid Muhammad Kirmani were the only two persons to attend upon the Saint, this was when the latter was staying in the mansion of Malik 'Imadu'l Mulk Rawat-i-Ard, the maternal grandfather of Amir Khusraw, not long after the Malik's death which is said to have taken place in about A H 671 (1272-73 A D)³. Both the Sayyid and Khwaja Mubashshar are stated to have been very young (*khurd*) at that time.⁴ According to Amir Khurd, his father died in A H 749 (1348-49 A D) at the age of 90 (lunar) years,⁵ which means that he was born in A H 659 (1260-61 A D).

In other words, Khwaja Mubashshar was in the Saint's service from about A H 665 (1266-67 A D) or so. This would make Khwaja Mubashshar the senior most personal attendant of the Saint who had brought him up like a son, having been attached to him from the very childhood. For not only Amir Khurd and others call him 'the old retainer' (*Khidmatgār-i-qadīm*) and also a member of the inner circle of the Saint or 'one of the select or close companions and personal attendants' (*yakī az yārān-i-a lā wa khidmatgārān*), but the Saint himself once related a moving incident of his childlike behaviour in his childhood towards another saintly person, Maulana Ahmad Karthali, which, incidentally, testifies to the great humane qualities of tenderness, sympathy, kindness, compassion, modesty, etc., as much of the Saint himself as of Maulana Karthali. The Saint related that once when the Maulana came to

¹ This is perhaps an echo of the statement of Amir Khurd *op cit*, p 281 that his uncle Sayyid Quṭbu d-Din Husain and Khwaja Mubashshar were brought up by the Saint in place of (i.e. like) his own sons.

² His grave is shown alongside that of his father in the enclosure near Amir Khusraw's Tomb.

³ Muḥammad Wahid Mirza, *The Life and Works of Amir Khusraw* (Lahore 1962) p 36.

⁴ Amir Khurd, *op cit*, p 108.

⁵ *Ibid*, pp 210, 214.

see him Mubashshar who is (now) my personal attendant (*khidmatgār*), and who was still a child (*tifl*) behaved rudely (*bi adabī kard*),’ whereupon the Saint hit him with a rod (*chūb*) This punishment caused great pain to the Maulana who started crying saying that ‘it was his inauspiciousness that brought the grief to the boy’¹

It was evidently his life long association with and attachment to the Saint that Mubashshar came to be regarded as a member of the inner circle and enjoy a high position among the Saint’s retainers and personal attendants For, hagiological works agree that he was a much sought-after man, and whenever there would be any occasion necessitating some sort of mediation or intercession with the Saint in any matter, Khwaja Mubashshar would be in demand We have it on the authority of no less a personage than Shaikh Nasirū’d-Dīn Mahmūd Chiragh-i-Dīhlī, the Saint’s chief disciple and later on his successor in the spiritual hierarchy himself, that when in his early career, he had once come from Awadh and was practising almost perpetual fasting and taking very little food, his brother who had also accompanied him to Delhi got worried and approached Mubashshar saying that so and so had given up food and would, as a result, die and asked him to bring the matter to the notice of the Saint Mubashshar not only conveyed the fact to the Saint but added something on his own, saying whenever I remove the *kandūrī*,² I find the meals in front of so and so (i.e. Shaikh Nasirū’d-Dīn Mahmūd) untouched The Saint then sent to the latter through Khwaja Mubashshar one loaf (*qurḡ*) weighing about two *sirs* and some sweets (*halva*) and desired him to partake of all³ Incidentally, the above narration indicates that one of the duties of Khwaja Mubashshar was to serve meals to the inmates and guests of the Khanqah

Likewise, in the matter of reconciling the unrelenting Saint to the repenting Hadrat Burhanū’d-Dīn Ghariḥ who had in some way displeased him and of his reinvestiture as one of his successors (*khalfā*), Khwaja Mubashshar was also approached⁴ He was, again, one of the five member group of select or close companions (*yārān-i-lā*) and personal attendants (*khidmatgārān*), which presented to the Saint, then on his death bed with a panel in the hand writing of Amīr Khusrāw, containing the names of thirtytwo highly respected companions and disciples of the Saint for his consideration for the nomination of a successor⁵

Khwaja Mubashshar seems to have been endowed with a sweet melodious voice and had sufficient knowledge of music as well For he and Khwaja Iqbal are stated to have set to tune the casual Hindi utterances of the Saint as well as of others It is related that once the Saint passed by a well along the road which he had taken and heard the owner of the well who was prodding his water-drawing mules or bullocks, when the leather tank was full, to proceed outward to the original further place, with the words *Bāhīrī-ho-Bāhīr*, that is to say ‘Go outwards, go’ This rhymed utterance sent the Saint into a state of ecstasy Khwaja Iqbal and Khwaja Mubashshar who were present, set these words to tune and sang it all the way before the Saint who continued to be ecstatic throughout⁶ It has also been related on the authority of

¹ Hasan Syzī, *Fawa'id u l-Fu'ad*, ed Muḥammad Latīf Malik (Lahore, 1966) p 112 Amīr Khurīd *op cit* p 537 The incident is related a little differently in *Afdalū l-Fawa'id* another *Malfūz* of the Saint attributed to Amīr Khusrāw (see *Afdalū l-Fawa'id*, Urdu translation ed Muḥammad Latīf Malik Lahore, 1960 p 28, see also *Ma'arif* Urdu Monthly, Azamgarh vol 123 No 5 May 1979 p 355)

² *Kandūrī* means food prepared and distributed at a ceremony observed in honour of some holy person, hence meals.

³ Hamīd Qalandar, *Khairū l-Mayālīs* ed Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizāmī (Aligarh, circa 1959), p 186

⁴ Amīr Khurīd, *op cit* p 281

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21 The other four members of the group were Amīr Khurīd’s uncle Sayyīd Qutbū d-Dīn Husain, Shaikh Nasirū d-Dīn Maḥmūd, Maulana Fakhrū’d Dīn Zarradī and Khwaja Iqbal the *Khādīm* (Attendant)

⁶ Sayyīd Muḥammad Akbar Husain *Jawami u l-Klam* (being the *Malfūzāt* of his father, the celebrated Gulbargā saint Sayyīd Muḥammad Husain Gaisū Daraz and chief disciple of Shaikh Nasirū d Dīn Maḥmūd

Shaykh Nasirud Din Mahmud Chiragh i Dihli that in the Sama assembly Khwaja Mubashshar used to occupy the seat next to the Saint on his left while on the right would seat Amir Khusraw and Amir Hasan Sijzi¹

This is all we know about Khwaja Mubashshar who was in his own way a famous person of his time. It will therefore, be easily conceded that this newly discovered epitaph has added considerably to this meagre knowledge as stated above and has in particular provided definite date of his death, indicating that he had predeceased, by about 22 years Amir Khurd's father who was more or less of his own age, both having, as lads, served the Saint in their childhood as mentioned above. After the discovery of the inscription under study, this casual statement assumes greater importance in that it helps us to fix, albeit approximately the time of the birth of Khwaja Mubashshar. It has been seen above that Sayyid Mubarak Kirmani was born in about A H 659 (1260-61 A D)². Since on his son Amir Khurd's own admission, he and Mubashshar were more or less of the same age, it would not be very much incorrect to place the birth of Khwaja Mubashshar also at about the same time, with a margin at the most, of a couple of years earlier (possibly than later) than that of the Sayyid. In other words, Khwaja Mubashshar must have been born some time during the second half of the sixth decade of the seventh century A H, that is to say some time during A H 656-661 (1258-1263 A D).

Note

As this article was about to be sent to the Press, I came across a categorical statement of the late Khwaja Hasan Nizami in which he says 'This tomb (مزار) was in a cavity or pit (غار) after filling which I have brought the (present) tombstone from the Tomb of Hadrat Sultanul-Masha'ikh and placed it (here) and have got engraved (and set up) a detailed inscription'³

Thus, the question of the present inscribed sarcophagus not being *in situ* is now solved beyond any doubt. It is, therefore, necessary that either the sarcophagus is restored to its original place or a note indicating its original position is set up in the form of a new inscription or addition in the inscriptional notice set up by the late Khwaja Sahib, to avoid any misunderstanding that may arise in the minds of the future generations.

(footnote contd from p 8)

Chiragh i Dihli) ed Hafiz M H Siddiqi (Kanpur, A H 1356) p 150. The Hindi words are recorded with a slight variation in later works. For example M Bulaq, *Matlubi Talbin*, Ms at Khajua (District Saran, Bihar), records *Bahur Re Bhaiyya Bahur* (i.e. Outwards, O brother, outwards) and states that the two attendants had a David like melodious voice (*Lahn i Da udi*). See also *Burhan* (Urdū Monthly), Delhi, vol 80 No 6, June 1978 p 331.

¹ Bashirud Din Ahmad, *op cit*, p 769. This statement could not be traced in the Shaykh's *Malfūz* entitled *Khairul Majalis* by Hamid Qalandar (*op cit*). Another *Malfūz* attributed to him is *Miftahul Ashiqin* by Maulana Muhibbullah, which appears to have been published by the Muhtabai Press Delhi decades ago, I have not been able to consult it.

² See page 7, *supra*.

³ Khwaja Hasan Nizami *Nizami Bansari* (Delhi, 1941) p 410 where the present Tomb of Hadrat Taqī d-Dīn Nūh is also illustrated. The detailed inscription referred to here has been quoted in full above (p 4).

EPITAPH OF SIX MARTYRS FROM BARI KHATU IN RAJASTHAN

BY N M GANAM
Superintending Epigraphist

Bari Khatu or Khatu as it is also known (latitude 27°05', longitude 74°20'), now reduced to a mere village, was a town of considerable importance in the medieval period. It is situated in the Jael *Tahsil* of Nagaur district in Rajasthan and is approached from the Khatu Railway Station on the Degana-Ratanpur section of the Northern Railway, about three kilometres away ¹

Despite its importance, the place has been little known to archaeologists and historians ². It does appear to have attracted the attention of the officials of the Archaeological Survey of India in the first decade of the present century, but the visit does not seem to have been more than cursory ³. It was the late Hafiz Mahmud Khan Sherani (who originally hailed from the nearby Chhoti Khatu) of the Oriental College, Lahore, who first brought to light from here the inscription of Iltutmish and subsequently, on invitation from him, Dr M 'Abdu'llah Chaghtai, then of the Deccan College, Poona, visited the place in the early thirties and published a few records from the place ⁴. It was during his two visits as Exploration Assistant of the Archaeological Survey, Western Circle, Baroda, to the place in 1958 that the present writer surveyed its monuments and reported a number of inscriptions. Further exploration by the officers of the Epigraphy Branch of Arabic and Persian Inscriptions, Nagpur, in the years to come, yielded quite a number of inscriptions. All these have been listed in the annual epigraphical reports of the Survey, ⁵ and some of them published in the earlier issues of this series ⁶.

Bari Khatu stands on rocky place overlooking two prominent hills of which one situated in the extreme western end of the town is fortified. The fort-wall is now in ruins and rests largely on the ledge of the hill, its two extant entrance gates are flanked by circular bastions. The archaeological remains in the fortified area comprise temple ruins, two large tanks, a deep rock-cut well, few images and a dilapidated mosque.

The town now merely reduced to a village must have been prosperous and extensively inhabited during the medieval period and might have included the present village of Chhoti Khatu⁷ situated about five kilometres away. It has a long history as revealed through its ruins and inscriptions. The first mention of the place occurs in the Harsa inscription at Sikar, a district headquarters in Rajasthan dated V S 1030 (973 A D) in the reign of the Chahamana

¹ For references to the history and inscriptions of the place, see *Epigraphia Indica Arabic and Persian Supplement (EIAPS)*, 1966, p 4, f.n 3 and *ibid*, 1970 p 32, f.n 2

² For example, the town does not find mention in a latest work on the subject viz Dr K C Jain, *Cities and Towns of Rajasthan* (Delhi, 1972)

³ *Progress Report of the Western Circle Archaeological Survey of India* 1909 10, pp 50 51

⁴ For details, see *EIAPS*, 1966, p 4, f.n 2, 3, p 5 f.n 4

⁵ *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE)*, 1958 59 Nos D, 170 82, *ibid*, 1962-63, Nos D, 194 207, *ibid*, 1966-67, Nos D, 199-214, *ibid*, 1969-70, Nos D, 155 59, *ibid*, 1975 76, Nos D, 168 70

⁶ *EIAPS*, 1966, pp 6, 7, 13, 16, 17, *ibid*, 1967, pp 9, 12, 20, *ibid*, 1969, p 50, *ibid*, 1970 p 32

⁷ Chhoti Khatu also contains structures comprising a step-well, sculptures and inscriptions of medieval period (*Indian Archaeology*, 1968-69—*A Review*, pp 69 70, Nos 55 56). For a Persian inscription from the place, see *ARIE*, 1962-63, No D, 193

(Chauhan) king Vigraharaja II,¹ wherein it is called Khattakupa—obviously the ancient name of the place—and described as one of the *Visayas* (Territorial Divisions) of the Sapadlaksha (Sivalik of Muslim historians) kingdom of the Chauhans. According to another inscription, from Bari Khatu itself Ilahana Deva ruled there as *Mahāmandalesvara* under Maharajadhiraj Somesvara (*circa* 1168–1177), also of the Chauhan line.

This shows that Bari Khatu was an important place under the Chauhans. With its strategic position and strong fort, it could provide an excellent base for offensive as well as defensive military operations. It must have also enjoyed importance due to its location on the main route to Ajmer from the two important cities of the time Delhi and Nagaur. After the defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan by Shihab-ud-Din Muhammad bin Sam in 1191 and conquest of Ajmer soon after, a major part of the Chauhan kingdom, which included Bari Khatu and Nagaur, both strategically important forts in the region, fell into his hands. Bari Khatu since then formed part of the Delhi empire (except for a short period when it was under the *Khanzadas* of Nagaur), as is mainly known from the inscriptions from the place ranging in their dates from the early thirteenth century to the end of the eighteenth century.³

The epigraph proposed to be studied in this article is one of these. It is an interesting record in that it contains an epitaph commemorating the martyrdom of six persons who fell in a religious war (*ghazā*) and recounting the gallantry displayed by them. It states that the six were killed on the day of *Īd*, on the 1st *Shawwal* 761 (15th August 1360) in a religious fracas after displaying great valour. They are stated to have displayed feats of swordsmanship and driven back nine times a horde of two hundred horsemen. They are further reported to have rent asunder seven lines of the opponents 'within the twinkling of an eye'. The epitaph further states that since they participated together in the religious war, they also found a common place, i.e. were buried at the same place. The concluding lines of the text invoke Allah's mercy upon the six warriors for their having fallen martyrs on the day of the *Īd* festival.

The epigraphical tablet is built into the western wall of the graveyard, locally called Chha *Shahid* (lit. Six Martyrs, so called after these six warriors), situated on the foot of the hill to the north of the village.⁴ Measuring 35 by 75 cm, it is inscribed with a text of five Persian verses written horizontally. The quality of verse though not mediocre, is somewhat poor, betraying strong local Indian influence. The style of writing also is conventional *Naskh* of no particular merit, it conforms to the style of some other contemporary records.

The text has been read as follows —

TEXT

Plate I (b)

یک ساعت هفت صف دریدند	۱ این سس عاری کے نا بدیدند
یکجای مقام اراں گردیدند	۲ در راه عرا نگانه رسید
در بع ردن عقب بدیدند	۳ نه نار دو صد سوار راندند
در هفتصد سبب یک شهیدند	۴ در عره عند ماه شوال
دیرا که شهید رور عیدند	۵ نارب همه سبع گردان

¹ *Epigraphia Indica* vol II pp 116–30

² *ARIE* 1962–63 No B 873

³ The earliest inscription from Bari Khatu is dated A H 599/1203 A D (*ARIE* 1962–63 No D 200)

⁴ *ARIE* 1958–59 No D 176. The graves of these martyrs can fortunately be recognised as three of them are marked by epitaphs as will be seen presently. The remaining three graves must have been adjacent to these

TRANSLATION

(1) These six gallant warriors,¹ who, till people saw,² tore open in one moment seven rows (of the enemies),

(2) went alone in the path of religious war (and) hence selected their (last) place (here) at one spot

(3) They repulsed two hundred cavaliers nine times, while wielding swords, they did not look back

(4) On the Id day, the first of the month of Shawwal, in (the year) seven hundred sixty one (1st Shawwal 761=15th August 1360), they obtained martyrdom

(5) O God ! honour each of them with (the Prophet's) intercession, because they have obtained martyrdom on the day of 'Id

From the above, it is clear that a religious war or encounter in which six Muslims laid down their lives after resisting a formidable force took place on the day of 'Idu'l Fitr, an Islamic festival celebrated as Thanksgiving to God on the completion of the thirty days' fasting in the month of Ramadan. The epigraph does not specify the nature of the encounter nor does it give any causes or the final result of the same. In view of the paucity of information available to us on the history of the region, it is difficult to say if the encounter was consequent upon the attack by a neighbouring non-Muslim rebel or independent chief or group of people or the like, or it represented an attack by some marauders in search of booty or so. Also, the text does not mention the name of the reigning monarch but the event took place in the reign of Firūz Shah Tughluq (1351-88 A D), who seems to have held authority over the region. But for the present inscription, this interesting historical event would have remained unknown.

It would appear that a pillar bearing an identical text was originally set up at the head of or near the central grave. It got detached and was perhaps lying loose in the thirties when it was removed by the late Hajī Muhammad Siddiq.³ Its style of writing, though in a different hand, is similar *Naskh*. The text, however, obviously in view of the shape and size of the pillar, is inscribed in ten lines with one hemistich a line on a space measuring 21 by 40 cm (plate II b).

The place where the six martyrs mentioned in the above two identical epitaphs were buried is, as stated above, called Chha-Shahid. It appears that originally, their graves were marked with inscribed tablets containing their names. Unfortunately, only three such tablets have survived. Two of these record merely the names, while the third contains a name as well as the date—day, month and the year in words, as may be seen from the particulars given below.

The first headstone measures 10 by 10 cm and contains the name Ādilshah (son of) Natthū, inscribed in two lines in bold *Naskh* broadly conforming to the same variety as in the above epitaph.

TEXT

Plate I (c)

عادلشہ (۱)

نہو (۲)

¹ The term Ghāzi literally means a participant in a religious war and is normally applied to survivors thereof.

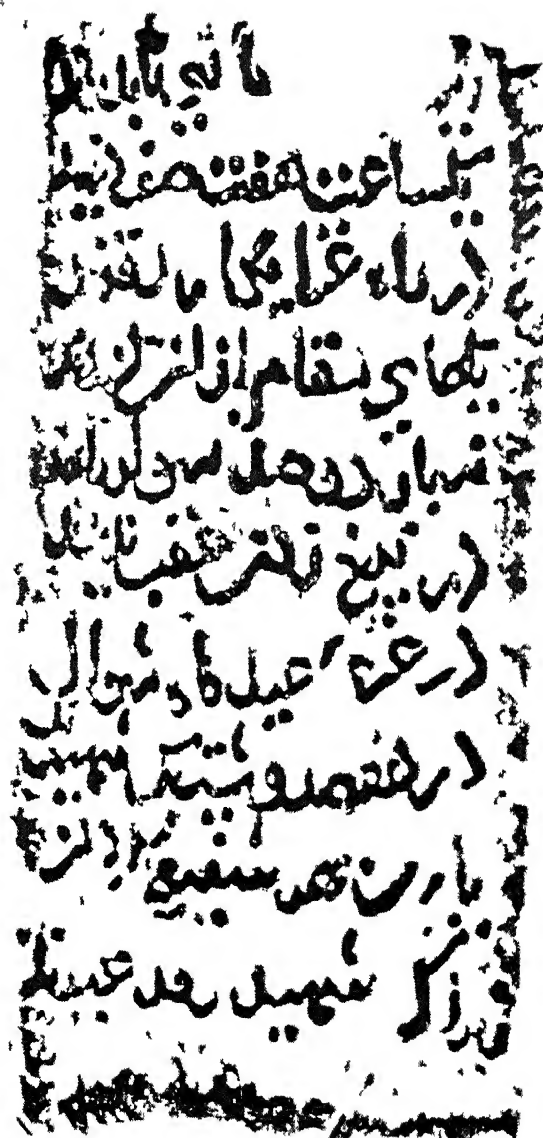
² This is the literal translation of تا دیدند. The poet seems to convey the sense that hardly did the people see (when they pierced the enemy lines) i.e. within no time.

³ This was probably when Dr Chaghtai accompanied by the late Hajī made a survey of the inscriptions.

(a) Epitaph of Muhammad 'Umar Bahalim (p 13)



(b) Another copy of Epitaph of six Martyrs (p 12)



TRANSLATION

(1) Ādilshah (son of)

(2) Natthū

The other also measures 10 by 10 cm and contains the name 'Ilmu d Dīn also inscribed in the same hand. The name of the deceased's father has partially survived but there is no doubt that it is also Natthū

TEXT

Plate I (d)

(۱) علم الدین

(۲) [ناتھو]

TRANSLATION

(1) 'Ilmu'd-Dīn (son of)

(2) Nat[thū]

The third measures 13 by 30 cm and contains a text written vertically, giving the day, the month and the year in words, and horizontally, at the top, recording the name Muhammad (son of) 'Umar Bahalim

TEXT

Plate II (a)(a) *Horizontally*

(۱) محمد عمر

(۲) باحلم

(b) *Vertically*

عمره شوال سنه احدى سس و سعمانه

TRANSLATION

(a) (1) Muhammad (son of) 'Umar

(2) Bahalim

(b) The first of Shawwal, year (A H) one (and) sixty and seven hundred (1st Shawwal 761=15th August 1360)

From the above, it is known that three of the six martyrs were 'Ādilshah, 'Ilmu'd-Dīn and Muhammad. Again, of these, 'Ilmu'd-Dīn and 'Ādilshah were brothers. It is futile to trace them as well as Muhammad from contemporary or other sources. It is also difficult to say if these men took part in the encounter on their own or as members of a paramilitary body or as soldiers of the regular army of the local official. Very probably, they were members of the local force.

AN INTERESTING PERSIAN INSCRIPTION FROM BARODA IN GUJARAT

BY DR Z A DESAI

I have taken up for study in this short article an important epigraph¹ which refers very probably to an offshoot of the Somnath expedition of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna undertaken in 1024. I have qualified my statement with probability because the epigraphical tablet being fragmentary, some portion of the text containing important details having a direct bearing on this aspect is lost. If the battle referred to in the fragmentary text was not part of Sultan Mahmud's Somnath expedition, the epigraph can be reasonably taken to report at least an expedition of Gujarat by the Ghazna Sultan or his forces almost about the same time or in any case not much long thereafter. But since no such expedition is known from any other source, written or otherwise, very probably the inscription must refer to the Somnath expedition, even otherwise the inscription would be very important in referring to another Ghazna invasion not recorded elsewhere.

This epigraph was first brought to my notice in 1972 by Shri N M Ganam, then of the Western Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India, Baroda, and now (in 1979) Superintending Epigraphist for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions Nagpur. He showed me its inked rubbing prepared by himself when I happened to be in Ahmadabad. Afterwards, I myself visited Baroda and got its rubbing prepared for our office and it is from one of these that the epigraph is being published here. I also took opportunity to examine the text on stone to satisfy myself about the correctness of the reading of a couple of words.

The epigraphical tablet is now lying loose in the mausoleum of Pir Amir Tahir, locally revered as a saint, situated in the compound of the mosque of the Piramitar quarter of Baroda (now Vadodara) city headquarters of a district of the same name in Gujarat State. It is of modest dimensions and measures 18 by 25 cm. Some portion on the top and the sides of the rectangular slab has broken off. As a result, part of the text is lost, comprising at least, a couple of lines at the top and a few words in the beginning of the middle portion of its extant 11 line text. While the missing lines do not offer a major handicap as far as the general purport is concerned, the most unfortunate lacunae thus caused is of the date or dates, the date of the event mentioned therein and possibly that of the setting up of the record remain unknown.

Nevertheless, the epigraph is extremely interesting, as it provides information, not recorded anywhere else, in connection with the invasion of Somnath by Sultan Mahmūd which, as is well known, took place in 1024. It refers to the martyrdom of Amir Tahir who is mentioned as a son of the brother of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi. Unfortunately the name of his father also beginning with the title Amir is lost. Amir Tahir, according to the text, lost his life along with eleven companions in the battle fought between them and the 'infidels' or non-believers that is the Hindus, in the northern precincts of the Bhesana Tank. The text further promises

¹ A paper on this inscription was sent for the 3rd Annual Congress of the Epigraphical Society of India held at Udipi South Kanāra District Karnataka State in March 1977. It was subsequently published without illustration in the *Journal of the Epigraphical Society of India* vol IV (1977). The same is being published here with some additional notes and illustration.

INSCRIPTION FROM BARODĀ (VAḌODARĀ)

(a) An Undated Epigraph from Baroḍa (p 15)



SCALE 5

SULTANATE INSCRIPTION FROM DHRĀNGADIRĀ

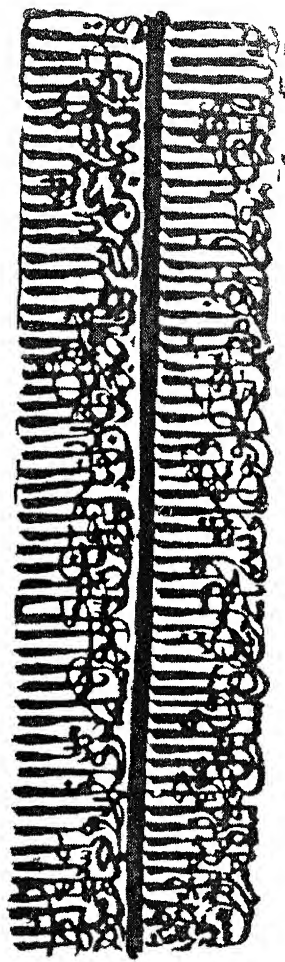
(b) Inscription of Sulṭān Ahmad I of Gujarāt (p 22)



SCALE 2

SO CALLED INSCRIPTIONS OF NASIRU D DIN MAHMUD II

(c) Inscription dated A H 847, from Hazrat Pandua (p 31)



SCALE 17

that whoever might visit the graves of these martyrs and recite the *Fātiha*,¹ would have their wishes fulfilled both in this world as also in the hereafter, through the blessings of the prophets the martyrs and the said Amīr, spoken of in the text as a saint (*buzurgwār*)²

Though not categorically stated to be so in the surviving text, it is obvious that the Amīr and his companions were buried at the site of the battle as has been the general practice. As mentioned above, the text that has come down to us is silent, both about the date of the event or of the setting up of the tablet. But the writing can be assigned, on palaeographical grounds to a date not later than the 15th century and perhaps even earlier,³ and as such, the epigraph must have been set up more than five centuries ago, if not more.

The style of writing of the epigraph is *Naskh* of a fairly good quality indicating a practiced hand. The letters have a marked sharpness of outline and cursiveness which are found in a number of inscriptions of Gujarat. The slab having weathered due to exposure to elements of nature, the writing has been adversely affected, making the decipherment somewhat difficult, but, as already mentioned above, the purport of the extant text is more or less clear.

The text has been read as follows —

TEXT

Plate III (a)

- | | |
|----|---|
| ۱ | سبل الله امیر طاهر بن ا[سر] |
| ۲ | برادر راده سلطان المجاهد [فامع] |
| ۳ | الکفره سلطان محمود عربوی در |
| ۴ | بردنک حوص بهسانه حاجب شمال ناکما [ر] |
| ۵ | حرب کرده نا نازده بر شهید سده هراں ؟ |
| ۶ | [کس که ؟] نراس کستها ناند نه ندگی |
| ۷ | وبا درین مرقد سرف روهد |
| ۸ | اهل اسلام رناب کسد و نفاحه |
| ۹ | الکتاب ؟ ناد کسد ارنک جمع اسا وسهدا |
| ۱۰ | وان بررگوار حاجب دسی و دناوی اسان |
| ۱۱ | روا گردد نمه و کمال کره آس رب (کدا) العالمس |

TRANSLATION

- (1) (in the) path of Allah,⁴ Amīr Tahir son of A[mīr] (and)
 (2) nephew of the Sultan, the Mujahid (i.e. warrior in the cause of religion), the subduer
 of

¹ *Fātiha* is the opening Chapter of the *Qur'an* whose recitation is considered very meritorious.

² The word *buzurgwar* usually meaning noble illustrious a learned man a philosopher, is also used for a saintly person.

³ Cf. *Epigraphia Indica Arabic and Persian Supplement* 1961, pl II b (dated 1264 A.D., from Prabhas Patan), pl IV (dated 1287 A.D. from Cambay) *ibid*, 1962 pls II c (dated 1357 A.D. from Patan) VIII a (dated 1383-84 A.D. from Mangrol) IX (dated 1385-86 A.D., from Mangrol) *ibid* 1963, pl IX b (dated 1472 A.D., from Prabhas Patan) etc.

⁴ The earlier part of this phrase contained in the preceding line, now lost must have read something like *al-Mujahid fi* i.e. striver in (the path of Allah).

(3 5) the infidels, Sultan Mahmūd Ghaznavī, having fought the infidels in the vicinity of the Tank¹ of Bhesana, towards north, was killed (lit attained martyrdom) along with eleven persons Whoever

(6) person comes to (the graves ?) of these martyrs (lit killed ones), to His Holiness

(7) or turns his face towards this august tomb

(8) the followers of Islam (i.e. Muslims) pay a visit, and with the *Fātiha*

(9) of the Book,² remember him, through the blessings of all the prophets, martyrs

(10) and this illustrious man, their needs, whether religious or temporal,

(11) will be achieved, through His bounty and His perfect generosity Amen 'O Lord of the Worlds'

This inscription, fragmentary as it is, is thus quite interesting That it provides at least a 500 year-old reference to Sultan Mahmūd's invasion of Gujarat is relatively not so important in view of contemporary and near contemporary accounts of the same,³ though it does indicate that in the 14th 15th century Gujarat, if not earlier, the said invasion was believed to have taken place But, there is one piece of information supplied, albeit indirectly, by the inscription under study, which is highly significant the epigraph refers to a site just north of the Bhesana Tank as the venue of the battle between Amīr Tahīr and his party and the local chief or his forces—the infidels of the text As far as has been established on the evidence of contemporary account of Sultan Mahmūd's court poet Farrukhī who had accompanied him in the Somnath expedition, this place, now part of the modern city of Baroḍa (Vadodara), as will be seen further on, did not lie on the Somnath route of Mahmūd's army⁴ This could only be interpreted to indicate that the battle or encounter referred to in the epigraph did not involve the main Ghazna army, but a contingent of soldiers led by Amīr Tahīr which was either assigned for ensuring supplies on the way or was sent by way of task-force or on scout duty or to ward off or contain and if necessary pursue any local forces that might have been acting as resistance army It may also be that this contingent led by Amīr Tahīr had strayed away from the main route, for, a look at the concerned map will immediately show that the site of the battle in question is pretty far from any point on the said route

Again, it is difficult to say if this engagement took place on way to or return from Somnath, though very likely the event took place on way there, as the return route of the Sultan's army was, as has been established, further west from the region in question Thus, it is through this record that we know for the first time about a subsidiary event connected with Sultan Mahmūd's Gujarat expedition It may perhaps be argued that the text does not specifically

¹ *Ḥauḍ* in the original, i.e. *talao* or *talab* of the vernacular

² The opening chapter of the Book (i.e. the *Qur'ān*)

³ It is perhaps due to our inadequate knowledge of or rather slackness (or perhaps even calculated indifference) in search not only of likely original sources but even modern researches that some of the modern writers notably Mr C.L. Vaidya and Mr K.M. Munshi have doubted if the Somnath expedition of Sultan Mahmūd ever took place A latest examination of the problem, including references to the contemporary and near contemporary evidence and modern researches will be found in Mrs Kulsum Parikh, 'Some Controversial Points of the Temple of Somnath' *Islamic Culture* vol XXVIII, No 1 (January 1954), pp 287-96 Earlier the Somnath expedition was exhaustively discussed by Muhammad Nazim in his *The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna* (Cambridge, 1931), Appendix M, pp 115-21, 209-24

⁴ The route has been determined on the basis of written sources in Muhammad Nazim, *op cit* Also a paper entitled 'An account of Sultan Mahmud Ghazni's expedition of Gujarat from Farrukhī's Qasidas' was read by Dr C.R. Nāik at the XVIIth Session of the All India Oriental Conference held in 1953 at Ahmadabad This paper does not appear to have been published in full, the volume of the proceedings of that session contains only a summary (*Proceedings of the All India Oriental Conference* XVIIth Session Ahmadabad, 1953) Also see Dr Dasharatha Sharmā, 'Some New Light on the Route of Mahmud Ghaznavī's Raid on Somnath', *Dr Satkari Mukherjee Felicitation Volume* (Banaras, 1969) pp 165-69

mention this battle or skirmish as a part or off shoot of this expedition, or that it may not refer to Sultan Mahmūd himself but to Sultan Saifu'd Dīn Mahmud,¹ his great grandson who ruled over the Panjab territories in *circa* 1065 1070. But firstly, as seen above, the entire text of the record has not come down to us, and secondly, history knows of no other expedition of any of Sultan Mahmūd's successors in this region—to such an interior place situated further south from the then Gujarat capital Nahrwala (modern Patan in Mehsana district)—more than two hundred kilometres towards the south east. Therefore, the encounter mentioned in the epigraph must have been part of or connected with the Somnath invasion. It would also follow that Amir Tahir must have led a contingent of the Sultan's force and not come on his own or on behalf of any other party.

In either case, anyway, the epigraph under study provides new information about a Ghaznavid invasion of Gujarat.

The epigraph is again very important in that it enables us to pinpoint with a fair amount of certainty the place in modern Baroda which witnessed the battle in which Amir Tahir and eleven of his companions fell. The text clearly states that the encounter took place in the immediate vicinity of the Bhesana Tank, towards its north. It is interesting to note that this site roughly corresponded with the modern urban area or quarter called Piramitar, in which the Tomb where the loose slab is found, is situated. It may also be noted that the present Polo Ground or the Pratapasimharao Gaikwad Coronation Gymkhana Ground of the city to the immediate north of which the Piramitar quarter is situated is marked in an old map of the Baroda city published in 1886, to correspond to the original site of the Bhesana Tank. In the Śaka 734 (812 13 A.D.) grant of Karka Suvarnavarsha, a 'Mahasenaka Tank' is mentioned as a separate geographical entity, to the south of Vadapadraka village, and this has been identified by competent scholars with Bhesana Tank.² The inscription under study would indicate that at least at the time of the setting up of the record under study, if not in the first half of the 11th century, the date of the event described therein, there did exist here a village named Bhesana, to the north of the Tank of which the battle or encounter took place.

Again, the Tank of Bhesana in the text does not seem to be intended as some specific name. It is very probably meant to convey the sense of the village tank—the tank of such and such a village. In that case, it would mean that till the time of setting up of the present epigraph, the village Bhesana had continued its separate existence. In other words, the village or town of Baroda as it existed then did not include this Bhesana village nor even the area where actually the encounter took place. Were it not so, the omission of any mention of Baroda in the text cannot be satisfactorily explained. Again, this also could indirectly support the surmise about the earlier date of the epigraph, for Baroda had already acquired prominence by the end of the 11th century, and by the first quarter of the 14th century it had acquired the status of a district headquarters under the Tughluqs.³ This evidence is quite interesting for the history of the development of Baroda throughout the centuries and therefore deserves the due notice.

¹ For an exhaustive account of his and his engagements in India see *Oriental College Magazine* Lahore vol. 21 No. 1 (November 1944) pp. 3-28.

² For details of the antiquity and history of the Tank and its identification see B. Subbarao, *Baroda Through the Ages* (Baroda 1953) p. 114, R. N. Mehta, *Baroda Through the Ages* *Journal of the Oriental Institute* Baroda vol. I (1953) p. 263 and his lecture in *Gujarat Sthalanam Vyakhyanamala* Part I (Baroda 1965), pp. 3-4.

³ For the history, antiquity and description of Baroda, see Jagjivandas Dayalji Modi, *Vadodara no Vaibhava* (Glory of Baroda) Baroda 1923; Chandrashankar Bhatt, *Vadodara* (Baroda, 1930); Dr. A. S. Altekar, *A History of Ancient Towns and Cities in Gujarat and Kathiawar* (Bombay 1926) pp. 37-38; article 'Prachin Vadodara (Old Baroda)' in *Vadodara Sahitya Sabha Rajat Mahotsava Grantha* (Baroda, 1941) pp. 58-80; Pandit L. B. Gandhi, *Vatpadra* (Vadodara) in *Aitihāsik Ullekho, Aitihāsik Lekhasamgraha* (Baroda, 1963) pp. 392-479; Subbarao, *op cit*, Mehta, *op cit*, etc.

Lastly, the place name Piramitar would have defied authentic explanation but for this epigraph. Amīr Tahir, the martyr prince, must have come to be venerated as a saint in the centuries following his martyrdom, which should explain the honorific 'Pir' meaning saint prefixed to his name. The term can be easily connected, without any fear of contradiction, to the name 'Pir Amīr Tahir' meaning the saint Amīr Tahir and not Pir Amīsha Tahir as locally believed.¹

It may also be noted in this connexion that Pir Amīr Tahir should not be confused, as modern writers seem to have done,² with the 15th century saint and spiritual guide of the erstwhile governor of Baroda, Prince Khalīl Khan (later on Muẓaffar Shah II), whose name is Sayyid Tahir and not Amīr Tahir.³ A corroboration to his Ghazna origin and royal connection comes from another, a later but quite reliable source. A huge Manuscript Scroll now in possession of Maulavi Habibu'llah Sahib, the hereditary Khatib of the city of Baroda, contains an entry to this effect: "Sayyid Sultan Amīr Tahir, his Tomb is near the Ghazni Mosque within the limits (in the original, *sim*, a Gujarati word meaning the limit, the land or the fields belonging to a village)⁴ of the old Vadodara city. He is the sister's son of Mahmūd Ghaznavi. He was a great ruler. In 425 H (written ۸۲۴ هـ), 12000 horsemen fell martyrs. Sultan Mahmūd Ghaznavi again came and humbled the infidels."

The above information is quite interesting in indicating that the compiler of the Scroll was aware of Amīr Tahir's Ghazna origin and connection with its royal family (though he wrongly makes him a sister's son of Sultan Mahmūd).⁵ The Mosque also, it may be noted, is reported to have been known at least in the time of the compiler, as Ghazni mosque.⁶ That the Tomb and the Mosque mentioned in the Scroll are the same as the one in the Piramitar quarter is beyond question. Their indicated location in the outlying lands of Old Vadodara (Baroda) is a clear proof.

Thus, there should be no hesitation in accepting the fact that the saint Pir Amīr Tahir who gave the present quarter of the town its name is the one mentioned in the record.

It may be that the present nomenclature and identification of the Tomb of the saint is derived from the present epigraph. Since Amīr Tahir, now revered as a saint, is unknown from historical sources, his Tomb could not have been identified except through this record, and his reputation or being revered as a saint, after his having died as a martyr, was based on the information contained therein. At what period, in the past, however, this happened, it is difficult to say, but a systematic search in the old archives or land records of the Baroda city and its environs may provide some further information. There is of course always a possibility that the Tomb might have been associated with Amīr Tahir through a long well-established local tradition. Even then, the epigraph would be an important corroborative, providing a documentary confirmation. In turn, again, the possibility that the epigraph itself might have given birth to the tradition, cannot be ruled out. Thus, viewed from every possible aspect, the record under study is a valuable document throwing light on a hitherto unknown episode in Gujarāt's history on one hand, and on the local history of urban Baroda, on the other.

¹ Bhaṭṭi *op cit*, p. 63 while mentioning the Tomb of the saint as the 15th century Piramitar's Dargah says that the word Piramitar is derived from three words comprising the name of the saint viz Pir Amīsha Tahir. Incidentally, Amīsha is a corruption of Amīr Shah.

² For example Mehta *op cit* (1965) pp. 5-6 (where the name is incorrectly spelt as Amin).

³ Sikandar *Mir at-i Sikandari* (Baroda 1961) p. 207.

⁴ H. H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms, etc.* (London, 1855; Delhi Reprint 1968) p. 484 first column.

⁵ It may be that the compiler of the Scroll had seen the epigraph under study but he does not refer to his having done so. Moreover, he supplies some new information.

⁶ At quite a few places in Gujarāt we have Ghazni mosques e.g. at Broach, Dohad, etc.

AN INSCRIPTION OF SULTAN AHMAD SHAH I FROM DHRANGADHRA

BY DR Z A DESAI

While in Ahmadabad on the 1st September 1978 my attention was drawn by Shri C M Atri Director Department of Archaeology Government of Gujarat to an interesting news item reporting the discovery of a 15th century stone inscription at Dhrangadhra¹ in Surendranagar district of Gujarat by Dr Indravadan N Ācharya, Lecturer in History at the Dharmendrasinhji College, Rajkot² Shri Atri also gave me a typed copy of the news item and subsequently I was able to procure the press cutting of the item where the inscription was illustrated

The news item described the circumstances in which the inscription was brought to light and also gave an English version of the record prepared through the cooperation of Mr N M Ganam then Deputy Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India Baroda and now Superintending Epigraphist for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions Nagpur and Shri N M Qazi Lecturer in Persian Dharmendrasinhji College given in deciphering and translating this inscription

On going through the press report I found that the version in question was not faithfully reported As a result while the published material did point out the importance of the record, its full import could not be stressed for want of its mistake free reading particularly since the correct name of the person mentioned therein—other than the king a noble of first rank, was not correctly deciphered, though it was quite distinct even in the published illustration

I therefore had already decided to edit the newly discovered inscription properly and was awaiting an opportunity to have its good rubbings made In the meantime, I looked up the builder (whom I already knew to be a front rank nobleman of his time) in the historical works as also in my miscellaneous notes In the course of this, among other things I came across a reference to the rubbing of this inscription having been exhibited along with other exhibits of historical interest at the second session of the Indian History Congress held at Allahabad in 1938 According to the Exhibition Souvenir the rubbing was received from the Jhalawar State along with two more exhibits—one a rubbing of another inscription and the other a copy of Mohammed Sahab's document Hijri (i.e. copy of a Letter of the Prophet of Islam)³ However there was no mention therein of the findspot or provenance of the epigraph

In March 1979, I visited the Watson Museum Rajkot⁴ to examine the rubbings of inscriptions stored there The first Curator of the Watson Museum the late Vallabhji Hardatt

¹ For the description of the town see *Bombay Gazetteer (BG)* VIII Kathiawar (Bombay 1884) p 432 *Gazetteer of India Gujarat State Surendranagar District (Surendranagar)* (Ahmadabad 1977) pp 700 01 For the history of the Dhrangadhra State see *BG* pp 422 432 *Surendranagar* pp 92 101 C Mayne *History of the Dhrangadhra State* (Calcutta and Simla 1921) which deals with different aspects of the description and history of the State and its Jhala rulers from the very beginning etc

² Dr I N Ācharya in the course of preparation of his research work on the Jhāla (Rajput) chiefs of Halvad and Dhrangadhra has extensively toured parts of the erstwhile Dhrangadhra State His thesis in Gujarati accepted for the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy by the Gujarat University Ahmadabad is still unpublished

³ *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Second Session Allahabad 1938 p 38 (e) 9 where the date of the epigraph is incorrectly given as A H 740 (1340 A D) instead of A H 840 (1437 A D)

⁴ This is perhaps the oldest extant Museum in the region having been started in 1888

Ācharya, had, during more than two decades of his tenure (1888-1910), undertaken extensive tours in different parts of the peninsular Gujarat (then known as Kathiawad and in recent times as Saurashtra) and secured impressions of about 800 inscriptions of all sorts, these include impressions of seventy to eighty Persian and Arabic inscriptions. In the course of my examination, I found three fine rubbings of the inscription under study along with a short note by the late Vallabhji Ācharya about its findspot, providing an exceedingly important piece of information that the epigraphical tablet was fixed over the (central) *mihāb* of the Jamī' Mosque situated in the Darbargadh (the Palace of the Darbar i.e. the Chief) of Dhrangadhra.¹ I thereafter visited Dhrangadhra, had fresh rubbings prepared² and made local inquiries about the history of the tablet, in view of the information contained in Shri Vallabhji Ācharya's note.

The inscriptional tablet is of white marble. It is now to be found in the *Chilla* (Memorial Tomb) of Jamīal Shāh Datar, which is situated to the southeast of the Ajit Housing Society Colony, opposite to the Rokadiya Hanuman and immediately behind (i.e. to the south of) the Eye Hospital, to the west of the Sitapur Gate of the town. The Colony itself is situated to the east of the New Bus Stand. The circumstances under which the inscriptional tablet came to be in its present place as described by Dr Ācharya amount to this. There were two tamarind trees in the compound of the said *Chilla*. These were uprooted about a decade ago in the cyclone, causing damage to the *Chilla*. While digging was undertaken in the adjoining compound to obtain clay needed for the repairs, the tablet was discovered. The first information about the tablet was furnished to Dr Ācharya by Shri Husainbhai Kesarbhai Solanki.³

The above information was more or less repeated by the Attendant (*Mujāwir*) of the Shrine, Bachushā Dawalshā Faqir, who, however, furnished one more piece of information that the fact of the presence of the tablet was publicised in a Rajkot Gujarātī periodical *Sāthi* by his maternal uncle Qasimshā who had seen it in the course of his stay with him about a year back. Whatever it be, neither Dr Ācharya nor the said Attendant nor any person whom I contacted had any knowledge of the original place of the tablet which was mentioned in the note of Shri Vallabhji Ācharya, on the basis of which the circumstances under which the tablet came to the present shrine could be more or less satisfactorily explained.

On inquiry, the Imam and *Khaṭīb* of the present Jamī' Mosque, situated adjoining the Sitapur Gate, who has lived there for four decades, while expressing his ignorance of the earlier whereabouts of the tablet, gave this valuable piece of information that the late Chief Ajitsinhji of Dhrangadhra (1900-1911) (after whom the said Ajit Housing Society derives its name) had demolished the mosque in his Darbargadh and in compensation, later on (presumably on representation by the town's Muslim population) allotted the land on which the present Jamī' Mosque was built through public subscription more than half a century back. I was also told that the building of the Stores of the State Public Works Department, bordering on the east with the *Chilla* premises (which was originally in the compound of the same building but

¹ Rubbings of each epigraph have been methodically kept in a dossier which contains a file containing impressions, another containing readings and except in a few cases a third containing notes on the geographical situation of the place, the findspot, the translation, detailed historical notes on the record and like information, all in Gujarātī. It would appear that these notes formed the basis of the study of inscriptions in English which appeared in *New Indian Antiquary* Bombay vol I (1938-39) pp 686-96, 724-39; *ibid* vol II (1939-40), pp 25-41, 592-606, *ibid*, vol III (1940-41), pp 111-27, 193-210, 273-88, 338-53, 371-82, 398-409.

² The inscription has been listed in the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE)* for 1978-79.

³ *Times of India*, Daily, Ahmadābad Edition 23-8-1978 p 5. Dr I. N. Ācharya, 'An Obscure Stone Inscription of the Fifteenth Century Discovered in Dhrangadhra', *Journal of the Gujarat Research Society* Bombay vol 40, No 4/148 (October, 1978), p 32.

has since been cordoned off by a wall) originally housed the Municipal Council Office under the erstwhile State of Dhrangadhara

Putting two and two together, it becomes clear that when the mosque was demolished by the Chief, the inscribed tablet of the mosque which was seen *in situ* in the last decade of the last or the first few years of the present century, by the late Vallabhji Ācharya, was removed to the Municipal Office where it was placed near the Chilla of Jamīal Shah under the tamarind tree and later on, as seen above, came to be fixed in its present place

This is also borne out by Shri G V Ācharya, who succeeded his father as the Curator of the Watson Museum in 1910 While reporting his visit of Dhrangadhra on 19 11 1913 for epigraphical survey to check up and prepare fresh rubbings of the three inscriptions already noticed by his worthy father and copy new ones, (if any), he mentions that the Jamī Mosque tablet was not traceable on that day, as 'the Mosque has disappeared from there', but again when he halted there for a day on 17 12 1913 on his way back to Rajkot from Halvad, he succeeded in having the loose tablet located by approaching, and through the interest taken by, the Diwan Sahib (Prime Minister) of the Dhrangadhra State, in the Municipal Office of the town and had a fresh rubbing thereof made¹

With this preliminary note, we proceed with the study of the epigraph

The inscriptional tablet, of white marble, is now fixed into a small dwarf wall, about 2 metres long and 1.5 metres high, raised on the west side of a platform which marks the Chilla of Jamīal Shah Datar² The wall has tapering miniature minars at the top and is decorated with small niches with a large one in the centre, and it is above the last mentioned that the inscribed tablet is fixed

The text consists of three lines written in horizontal panels in a highly artistic manner in elegant *Naskh* characters The calligraphy or penmanship is of a high order, its pictorial effect having been accentuated by the design and symmetrical arrangement of artistically moulded letters with their elongated strokes or somewhat angular lower parts In one or two cases, the top and rounder portion of the letter 'am (ع), etc., are fashioned into multi foils or floral motifs, recalling to mind a similar arrangement in the epigraph on the famous Jamī Mosque at Ahmadabad built by Sultan Ahmad Shah I in A H 827 (1424 A D) i.e. hardly a decade and a half earlier than the date of the epigraph under study It is a pity that the calligrapher of this fine epigraph has preferred to remain anonymous However, it may be safely surmised that the inscription under study was penned by the same calligrapher who designed the Ahmadabad Jamī Mosque record Very probably, he was a court calligrapher

No doubt, the inscription does suffer by comparison in visual effect, with its Ahmadabad counterpart, but that is due to the fact that the writing is adversely affected by natural causes and perhaps damaged through human negligence Not only the letters have lost some of their sharp outline, which accounts for the loss of effect, but the slab has suffered a crack in the top right portion

The language of the record is a curious mixture of Persian and Arabic It provides not

¹ *Annual Report of the Watson Museum of Antiquities* 1913 14 (partly in English and partly in Gujarati) p 34 According to Shri Ācharya it is inscribed in Arabī Tughra, its letters are also as in the case of most Persian inscriptions, in relief, the inscription is still very clear and well preserved' (*ibid*, p 36 No 63) In Appendix 3 of the same report these details of the slab are given white marble, length 1.5', width 2' 1/2" thickness 3 1/2" the text measures 1.3 in length 1.11 in width and is in 3 lines in Arabī (*ibid*, p 68, App 3, No 63)

² The Tomb of Jamīal Shah Datar (Datar literally meaning generous) is believed to be in Thatta in Sind (now in Pakistan) He is supposed to have stayed in Junagadh in Saurashtra for some time His most famous Chilla, situated on a 850 metre high hill named after him to the south east of the said town, attracts a large number of visitors around the year and more particularly at the time of his death anniversary (Shambhuprasad Desai *Junagadh and Girnar*, Junagadh 1975, p 309)

so uncommon an example of an inscription drifting from Persian into Arabic and back or from Arabic into Persian and back as is the case here (and that too repeatedly), with little consciousness of change in language. It will be observed that starting with a Quranic verse, it has a phrase in Persian indicating the object of construction and making reference to the reign of the king then again relapses into Arabic in mentioning the name, titles and pedigree of the king reverts back to Persian when mentioning the builder, and once more drifts into Arabic while giving the date (the month and the year) in words.

The three line text apart from quoting the Quranic verse referred to above, states that the mosque was built in the reign of the Sultan of the Sultans, Nasirū'd Dunya wa d Dīn Abu'l Fath Ahmad Shah son of Muhammad Shah son of Muẓaffar Shah by Munir Sultan on the 7th Rājab 840 (16th January 1437).

The tablet measures 62.5 by 48 cm. and the complete reading of the text is as under —

TEXT

Plate III (b)

۱ قال الله تبارک و تعالی و انما المساجد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا ساء ابن مسجد در
عهد دولت سلطان
۲ السلاطین ناصر الدین والدین ابوالفتح احمد ساه بن (کرا) محمد ساه بن مطهر ساه السلطان
سعی بنده اسدوار
۳ برحمت پروردگار سر سلطانی فی التاریخ السانع بن رحب رحب فدره سه اربعین
و بماسماه

TRANSLATION

(1) Says Allah, may He be blessed and exalted, 'And verily, the mosques are for Allah (only) hence invoke not any one else with Allah' ¹ The construction of this mosque (took place) in the time of the reign of the Sultan

(2) of the Sultans, Nasirū'd Dunya wa'd Dīn (lit. Helper of the State and the Religion), Abu'l Fath (Father of Victory)² Ahmad Shah son of Muhammad Shah son of Muẓaffar Shah the Sultan, by the humble creature (lit. slave) looking forward

(3) to the mercy of the Nourisher (i.e. God), Munir Sultan,³ on the date, the seventh of (the month of) Rājab may its dignity increase (in the year (A H) forty and eight hundred (7 Rājab 840=16 January 1437)

The epigraph thus assigns the construction of the mosque, since destroyed as stated above to Munir Sultan, who, as shall be shown presently, figures prominently in the reigns of Sultan Ahmad Shah I, the founder of Ahmadabad (in whose reign the mosque was built) and of his son and successor Muhammad Shah II. Dr. Ācharva, being unable to determine firstly the correct name of the builder and, secondly, the original place of the inscription, viz. the mosque the construction of which it sought to commemorate, could only presume that 'during the reign of Ahmad Shah I the Sultan of Gujarat (1411-1442)', there being a considerable Muslim population in and around Dhrangadhra, 'it would have been felt necessary to lay down the foundation of this mosque for offering prayers to Allah in 1437' ⁴

¹ *Qur'an* Chapter LXXII verse 18

² In Āchārya *op cit*, Muẓaffar Shah is stated to be the Sultan of all Sultans (and) the conqueror (*sic*) of the world and religion while these titles are intended for Ahmad Shah

³ Āchārya *op cit*, reads Munir Shah Tai (Tarmi?)

⁴ Āchārya, *op cit*

But the fact that the inscriptional tablet originally belonged to the mosque situated in the Darbargadh at Dhrangadhra and that it was erected by no less a person than a noble of high rank who subsequently became the minister of the Gujarat Sultans adds new dimension to our knowledge and changes the entire perspective. As we know from literary sources Munir Sultan was by this time already a noble of first rank under Sultan Ahmad Shah I. Almost exactly a decade and a half back to be exact on the night of 26th December 1422 he was instrumental in rescuing the Sultan, on his way back from Sarangpur (in Malwa) to Gujarat after leading an unsuccessful attack against the Malwa ruler Sultan Hoshang, from possible if not impending death by rushing to inform him of the surprised night attack of the Malwa Sultan. His timely action in waking up the Gujarat monarch resulted in the forced retreat of the Malwa Sultan.¹ In A H 836 (1433 A D), he was left by the Sultan to collect the revenue of the Dilwara country which the latter had run through.² In the early years of the reign—very probably on the accession—of Ahmad Shah I's son and successor Muhammad Shah II (1442-51) Malik Munir held or was given the title of Khan-i-Jahan.³ It was through his good offices and intercession that in A H 850 (1446 A D) the Raja of Dungarpur in the north east part of Gujarat (now in Rajasthan) surrendered to the Gujarat Sultan then on the expedition to the Vagad region, and was permitted to retain his territories.⁴

An important piece of information about the Malik's career under Muhammad Shah II ignored by Muslim chroniclers comes from an unexpected source—a Sanskrit historical play depicting the battle between Sultan Muhammad Shah II and Gangadasa the Raja of Champaner and its impregnable fortress of Pavagadh or Pavachal of the play.⁵ According to this work (by a contemporary author and perhaps an eye witness too, who also claims to have lived at the Sultan's court at Ahmadabad for six months before repairing to Champaner), (Malik) Munir was in charge when the Sultan's army numbering 50,000 marched against Pavachal.⁶ The Champaner expedition took place in 1449.⁷

Malik Munir must have been made the Minister by Muhammad Shah II when the latter conferred the title Khan-i-Jahan on him but he is categorically mentioned as such in the annals of the reign of Muhammad Shah's son and successor Qutb u Din Ahmad Shah II (1451-58). We are told that in the battle at Kapadwanj (now in Kaira—locally spelt and spoken Kheda—district), fought on the last day of Safar 855 (2nd April 1451) against Mahmud Khalji of Malwa who had then attacked Gujarat the Gujarat Sultan had with him in the Centre Khan-i-Jahan Malik Munir the Minister, along with other grantees including very senior members of the royal family.⁸

Nothing definite is known about the Malik after this date. However, in an eighteenth century Collection containing in the main Manual or Handbook of various departments of

¹ Sikandar *Mir at i Sikandari* (Baroda 1961) p 54

² Nizam u Din Ahmad *Tabaqat i Akbari* (Calcutta 1935) p 123 where Mir is a misprint for Munir. The name is correctly spelt in the portion quoted in E C Bayley *The Local Muhammadan Dynasties Gujarat* (London 1886 Reprint New Delhi 1970) p 121

³ He already held the title in A H 850 (1446 A D) according to Nizam u Din Ahmad *op cit* p 126 and Hajji Dabir *Zafaru l Walih bi Muzaffar wa Alih* vol I (London 1910) p 2

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ B J Sandesara *Gangadasapratapavilasa* A historical Sanskrit Play depicting the conflict between Sultan Muhammad of Ahmadabad and king Gangadasa of Champaner *Journal of the Oriental Institute Baroda* vol IV Nos 2-3 (December 1954-March 1955) pp 193-204

⁶ *Ibid* p 198. The number of soldiers commanded by the Malik at this time is given at p 197

⁷ Nizam u Din Ahmad *op cit* p 126 Hajji Dabir *op cit* p 2 M S Commissariat *History of Gujarat* vol I (Bombay 1938) p 129 Firsihta *op cit* p 190 and Sikandar *op cit* p 64 respectively place the event one and two years later

⁸ Sikandar *op cit* p 78 has *wav* (=and) between Khan-i-Jahan and Malik Munir but it is a misprint. Hajji Dabir *op cit* p 10 has correctly Khan-i-Jahan Munir Sultan

the government, it is stated that when the work of the construction of the city-wall of Ahmadabad was undertaken and portions were earmarked for different noblemen, the northern part extending from the present Idariya i.e. Delhi Gate to the Shahpur Gate was built under the supervision of Khan i-Jahan Munir¹. The said Collection does not say when this took place.

Except for the above, literary works do not provide any further information about or details of the career of this front rank nobleman and Minister. The new epigraphical find clearly indicates that Malik Munir Sultan held authority, obviously by way of holding *iqṭā'* or fief in Jhalawar or the region around modern Dhrāṅgadhra, the findspot of the epigraph, about 1437, the date of the inscription, in the time of Sultan Ahmad Shah².

This piece of information adds a new dimension to the history of the region as well as the town at this period. The early history of the Jhalas, a branch of which founded the subsequent State of Dhrangadhra, is not very wellknown. According to the available sources, the capital of the Jhalas is stated to be outside the main Kathiawad or Saurashtra during the first phase (1115-1420) when Dhana, Patdi and Mandal were at different times the seat of the chiefs in power but when or how long each remained so is not definitely known except perhaps that Patdi had this distinction during 1090-1441. During 1408-20, Satrasalji is believed to have ruled from Mandal³. It was during the time of his son Jetsinghji (1420-41), that Sultan Ahmad Shah I pressed hard the Jhalas who were constantly troubling him and drove them from Patdi to Kuva, about 20 kilometres to the north-west of Dhrangadhra. The capital seems to have been shifted in about 1488 to Halvad, 32 kilometres to the west of Dhrangadhra and it continued to be so until 1730, when Raisinghji is stated to have built the fort of Dhrangadhra and made it his capital for part of the year for administrative reasons. In 1782, Dhrangadhra became the permanent capital⁴.

Now from the inscription under study and its history as recapitulated above, it would appear that by 1437, the Gujarat Sultan had already established a strong foothold in Dhrangadhra itself, and therefore it is difficult to believe that about this time, the Jhala principality could be so near it at Kuva, as generally believed.

On the other hand, the inscription also tends to throw light, however indirectly, on the history of the Dhrangadhra town. As stated above, Dhrangadhra is stated to have been chosen capital for part of the year in 1730. From the epigraph under study, the existence of the mosque and through it, the existence of an important settlement as early as 1437, the date of the record—and perhaps earlier is clearly established. Again, it can be safely taken for granted that the mosque was built in the premises of the official residence of the Sultan's governor, which in all probability continued to be occupied by or was made the site of the new residential complex of the Jhala chief, when the capital was permanently shifted to Dhrangadhra, retaining however the mosque (which was razed to

¹ Dr C R Nāik *Descriptive Catalogue of Arabic and Persian Manuscripts* Gujarat Vidya Sabha Collection part II (Ahmadabad 1964) p 560 Serial No 300 Ms No 227 f 38 b where Khan i-Jahan Mir is evidently the scribe's mistake for Khān i-Jahan Munir.

² Incidentally a Persian inscription from Patdi indicates that it was under Tughluq occupation in 1369 A D in the time of Fīrūz Tughluq, whose predecessor Muhammad bin Tughluq also was in the town during his campaign against Taghi. Again a bilingual inscription from Mandal dated A H 820 and V S 1474 (1417 A D) mentions Sulṭān Ahmad Shah I and one Rana Ranavira and Malik Kamchand Dev (*ARIE* 1954 55 No B 86 and C, 20 where 86 B is a misprint for 86 also cf *Epigraphia Indica* vol II p 27).

³ Commissariat, *op cit* p 81 S C Misra *The Rise of Muslim Power in Gujarat* (Bombay 1963) pp 173 74 177 R C Parikh and H G Shastri *Gujarat no Rajakiya ane Sanskritik Itihas* vol V (Ahmadabad 1977) p 75.

⁴ For details, see C. Mayne, *op cit* pp 41 ff BG VIII pp 422 ff *Surendranagar* pp 92 ff etc. The reconstructed chronology of the Jhalas in the last mentioned work (pp 142 55) does not appear to be free from mistakes.

ground by one of his own descendants some time in the first decade of the present century) ¹

Thus, the town has a history much prior to 1730. It appears that almost from the inception of the Gujarat Sultanate, the Ahmadabad Sultan had made it the chief place of his territories in the region, placing it in charge of a powerful noble like Malik Munir Sultan who could keep an effective check on the refractory Jhala chiefs. The strategy seems to have been quite effective, for we find that the Jhalas were kept more or less in control till the central authority at Ahmadabad, first under the Sultans and later on under the Mughals, was strong, it was only in the post Aurangzeb period that they could get an opportunity of shifting to Dhrangadhra, which however became the full time seat of administration only some time later, in the reign of Jaswantsinghji (1765-1801) ²

¹ It may be of interest to note that even today there are mosques in the Darbargadh of some erstwhile states, as for example, Wadhwan, Sara Jasdan, etc., all in Saurashtra.

² BG VIII, p. 428, Acharya, *op cit* p. 33

CORRECT ATTRIBUTION OF THE TWO SO-CALLED INSCRIPTIONS OF NASIRUD-DIN MAHMUD SHAH II OF BENGAL

BY DR Z A DESAI

It is rather inexplicable that of all the other major provincial kingdoms, except perhaps, the Sharqis of Jaunpur, independent Bengal is the only one which has not found a chronicler. The history of the Sultans of Gujarat, Malwa, Deccan (Bahmanis and their successors) has been described by more than one chronicler—in some cases by not less than half a dozen. In the case of Bengal, we have only *Riyādu's-Salātīn* of Ghulam Husain Salim, which is a late 18th-century work compiled at the instance of Mr George Udny, an English official.¹ The earliest account of the kingdom occurs in the late 16th early 17th century historical works of Abu'l-Fadl, Nizamu'd-Din Ahmad, Firishta and the like.² But these accounts, apart from being very sketchy, are as a rule hopelessly incorrect particularly in the matter of the chronology of the Ilyas Shahī rulers.

No wonder, therefore, that it was only on the basis of inscriptions and coins—mainly through the efforts of H Blochmann and H E Stapleton in the second half of the last and Dr N K Bhattasali and others in the first half of the present century—that a fairly correct chronology of the Bengal Sultans could be established. Even then, in the case of some Sultans, e.g. the successors of Ilyas Shah, more particularly Ghiyathu'd-Din A'zam Shah, Shihabu'd-Din Bayazid, (what we call) the House of Raja Ganesh, there still remained gaps in our knowledge, particularly, of their dates. Unfortunately, at no stage, effort was made to procure and properly utilise (what I have always considered) a very important source for the Bengal history, namely a manuscript in the Hazrat Pandua (District Malda) Dargah, borrowed and used by Buchanan, which was unjustly dubbed as 'a careless and incorrect summary of *Riyaz us Salatin*' by the 'Doyen of Indian Historians',³ the late Sir Jadu-Nath Sarkar, though as was pointed out by me elsewhere,⁴ the information contained therein was found to be accurate. It is a pity that no efforts seem to have been made to trace this extremely valuable source, it is very probably lost to us for ever.

The coins and inscriptions have no doubt provided much needed material for reconstructing the history of the pre-Mughal independent Sultans, some of whom owe the knowledge of their existence to posterity through these media only. But at the same time, lack of proper care in handling of this material has resulted in certain inaccuracies creeping therein. One such instance is the attribution of some coins and three inscriptions to Sultan

¹ He appears to have been Commercial Resident of the East India Company's Factory at Malda (vide, Ghulam Husain Salim, *Riyādu s-Salarīn*, Eng. tr. Abdu s Salam, Calcutta, 1903. Reprint New Delhi, 1975 p. 2, fn. 4).

² Abu'l Fadl, *Ā'in-i-Akbarī*, vol I (Calcutta 1872) pp. 413-15, Nizamu d-Din Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i Akbarī*, vol III (Calcutta, 1935), pp. 260-72, Firishta, *Tarikh i Firishta* (Kanpur, 1884), pp. 292-304, Hajji Dabir, *Zafaru l Wālih bi-Muzaffar wa Ālih*, vol III (London 1928), pp. 953-83.

³ Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar *History of Bengal*, vol II (Dacca 1948), p. 123. For Professor S A 'Askari's indignant criticism of the tendency to brush aside literary and theological works as pious frauds', see S H Askari, A Critical Study of History of Bengal, vol II, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (JASB)*, Letters vol XVI (1950), p. 59.

⁴ Ziāu'd-Din Desai, 'Some New Data Regarding the Pre-Mughal Muslim Rulers of Bengal', *Islamic Culture* vol XXXII, No. 3 (July, 1958), p. 202.

Mahmūd Shah II whom the above late 16th early 17th century literary sources assign a rule of six months to one year towards the close of the 15th century, but about whom, they do not furnish any detailed or correct information ¹

This bare mention of Mahmūd Shah II in these chronicles was sought to be substantiated by unimpeachable epigraphical and numismatic evidence' comprising, as stated above, some coins and three inscriptions, brought to light quite some time back. Since Dr A B M Habibu'l lah wrote more than three decades back, to point out that 'mystery surrounds the antecedents of Mahmud Shah II,² no fresh material has so far come to our notice which would help clear up the mystery. On the other hand, the authenticity of the so called unimpeachable numismatic and epigraphical material has been challenged and even proved to be otherwise. Professor Dr Abdu'l Karim had shown as early as in 1960 or so that no coin has been so far found which can be ascribed beyond any doubt to this king and the few that have been spoken of as his are actually those of Nasirud Din Mahmud Shah I³. Sometime afterwards, Dr Abdu'l Karim also challenged the assignment of the said three inscriptions to Mahmud Shah II⁴. Independently, (unaware of Dr Abdu'l Karim's article published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* which was then not available to me)⁵ in a paper read at the third session of the Bangla Desh Itihas Parishad held in May 1973, I had shown that two of the three inscriptions, namely the one from Hazrat Pandua (District Malda) and the other from Kalna (District Burdwan) but now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, do not mention at all Mahmud Shah II, but they refer, respectively, to the reigns of Nasirud Din Mahmud Shah I and Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and as such, are wrongly attributed to the former⁶. About the third record, the one from Chunakhali (District Murshidabad), Dr Abdu'l Karim had expressed very strong doubts and suggested that until fresh evidence was available or its facsimile could be verified, it should be assigned to Saifu'd Din Firuz Shah (1487-90) to whom it was assigned earlier⁷. I had also in my paper doubted the assignment of the inscription and deferred final judgement or definite conclusion until after seeing the inscription or its reproduction⁸. Since then, I have secured a rubbing of that epigraph which unambiguously rejects its ascription to Mahmud Shah II and makes it, beyond any doubt, a record of Saifu'd Din Firuz Shah. This inscription is being published elsewhere in this number (pp 36-43).

There is thus, undoubtedly, no epigraphical evidence (and we may say numismatic too) to establish or corroborate the rule of Mahmud Shah II, only the annals of the Mughal period mention this king and therefore (as I had stated in the paper under reference) 'it would not be

¹ Abu'l Faql *op cit* pp 413-15. Nizamud Din Ahmad *op cit* p 269. Firishta *op cit*, pp 300-01. Hajji Dabir *op cit* p 980. The information supplied by these historians amounts to this: Mahmud Shah succeeded his father Firuz Shah, when the latter died in A H 899 (1493-94 A D) and ruled for one year. Hajji Dabir gives A H 900 (1494-95 A D) as the year of his accession.

² Sarkar *op cit* p 139.

³ Dr Abdu'l Karim *Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal* (Dacca 1960) pp 173-76.

⁴ Dr Abdu'l Karim 'A Fresh Examination of the Inscriptions Attributed to Mahmud Shah *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan (JASP)* vol XIII, No 3 (April 1968) pp 319-28.

⁵ For example as early as in 1960 of the three inscriptions wrongly attributed to him the Hazrat Pandua record was shown by me to belong to Nasirud Din Mahmud I. See *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE)* 1959-60 No 22 of Appendix D. I had also thereafter deciphered his so called Indian Museum inscription as a record of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, but this could not be brought to the notice of the scholars until much later in 1973.

⁶ *Proceedings of the Third History Congress Dacca 1973 Bangla Desh Itihas Parishad (Proceedings Third History Congress)* Dacca, 1975 pp 44-50.

⁷ Abdu'l Karim *op cit (JASP)* p 325.

⁸ *Proceedings Third History Congress* p 50.

surprising if Dr Habibu'llah's statement could be further modified to say that mystery surrounds the very existence, as a ruler of course, of Mahmūd Shah II ¹

This should have been the end of the matter. But while editing the Chunakhali inscription recently (1979), I could lay my hands on Dr 'Abdu'l-Karīm's article referred to above. On consulting it, I found that in the matter of the two inscriptions which were published with their facsimiles, namely Hazrat Pandua and Kalna (Indian Museum Calcutta) records, Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm's views require some modification. He has erred in assigning the Kalna record to Sultan Ruknu'd-Dīn Barbak Shah (1459-74), and also in deciphering the date of the Hazrat Pandua inscription which, however, he correctly assigns to Nasīru'd Dīn Mahmūd Shah I ². Since in the interest of historical and epigraphical studies, it is essential to put the record straight, I am re editing the two inscriptions (and give their facsimiles also alongside, to facilitate verification of their readings) in the hope that the dating of the Hazrat Pandua record in the year A H 847 (1443 A D) instead of A H 857 (1453 A D) as done by Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm and the assignment of the Kalna record to Aurangzeb will be now considered final.

I INSCRIPTION FROM HAZRAT PĀNDUĀ (DISTRICT MĀLDĀ)

This epigraph, engraved on a slab of stone measuring 74 by 22 cm which is reported to have been fixed in the east wall, over the right hand doorway, of the Mosque or Chilla-Khana of the Dargah of the celebrated patron-saint of Bengal, Hadrat Nūr Qutb i-Ālam at Hazrat Pandua, has been repeatedly noticed and published. Everyone who has noticed it, right from General A. Cunningham who discovered it down to Maulavī Shamsu'd-Dīn Ahmad, including H. Blochmann (whose reading was adopted by J. H. Ravenshaw), had believed it to be a record of Nasīru'd Dīn Mahmūd II dated A H 896 (1491 A D) ³.

Obviously, Blochmann was the first to publish its reading which has been adopted by all the later writers, none of whom, however, thought it necessary to subject it to scrutiny. This was probably because the text was read by a scholar of repute like Blochmann having experience of decipherment of a large number of inscriptions from Bengal as well as elsewhere ⁴. Moreover, the basis of the assignment of the record to Mahmūd Shah II would to a casual reader appear plausible enough, the name Mahmūd Shah a's-Sultan preceded by regal titles Nasīru'd-Dunya wa'd-Dīn Abu'l Mujahid was quite clear and the deciphered date was A H 896 (1490-91 A D), and since these facts perfectly fitted in with the accounts of the above-mentioned later historians according to which, a king Mahmūd Shah ruled at about this period, it was immediately accepted by scholars working in the field of Bengal history including the author of the relevant chapter in the latest work on the subject, volume two of the *History of Bengal* (who were on the lookout for numismatical or epigraphical evidence for him) as an inscription of that monarch. No one has taken note of the fact that Blochmann himself had

¹ *Proceedings, Third History Congress* p. 50

² Abdu'l Karīm, *op cit* (JASP) p. 326

³ A. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Reports* vol. XV (Calcutta, 1882) p. 83 *JASB* XLII (1873) p. 289, pl. VII, No. 3, with illustrated text and translation by H. Blochmann. J. H. Ravenshaw, *Gaur Its Ruins and Inscriptions* (London, 1878) p. 76 pl. 49 No. 8A, Ābid Ali Khan and H. E. Stapleton, *Memoir of Gaur and Pandua* (Calcutta, 1931), p. 114, Maulavī Shamsu d Dīn Ahmad *Inscriptions of Bengal*, vol. IV (Rajshahi, 1960), p. 141, figure 33

⁴ Blochmann must be considered unofficially the Honorary Muslim Epigraphist to the Archaeological Survey of India in the early decades of its history. He published a large number of inscriptions (not only from Bengal but also from other parts of the country), the rubbings of which were sent by the officials of the Survey to the Asiatic Society of Bengal Calcutta with which Blochmann was closely associated. His Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, *JASB*, XLII (1873), pp. 209-310 (later on issued separately) still retains its utility.

found the date illegible (though, misled perhaps by the historical accounts, he took it to be A H 896)¹ and subsequent writers including Maulavi Shamsu'd Din Ahmad read it doubtfully. It is almost certain that were it not for the said historical works vouchsafing the existence of a later Mahmūd Shah, the inscription would have been subjected to closer scrutiny, particularly in regard to its date, for in that case everyone would have tried to correlate the epigraph to Nasirud Din Mahmūd Shah I. It was for the first time in 1960, when old impressions lying in the office of the Superintending Epigraphist, Archaeological Survey of India, Nagpur, were examined for listing them in the Survey's epigraphical report that the inscription was first deciphered to represent a record of Nasirud Din Mahmūd Shah I (the first of the later Ilyas Shahi Sultans) dated 22nd Rabi' II 847 (20th July 1443).² Subsequently in 1968, Dr 'Abdu'l Karim who had earlier expressed the view that there is in fact no numismatical evidence to support the kingship of Mahmūd Shah II re-examined the inscription and came to the conclusion that this record belonged to Nasirud Din Mahmūd Shah I only. At the same time, while arriving at this correct conclusion, Dr 'Abdu'l Karim committed a fresh mistake, in regard to its date (given in words) which in his opinion, should be better read as A H 857 (1453 A D), since according to him, the writing in the entire date portion is a little mutilated and the unit and ten of the year are not at all distinct.³

As against this, I am certain that the year is A H 847 and in no case A H 857. Before I proceed further to prove this, it would be better to quote the reading of Blochmann accepted by scholars until it was challenged by Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim and the latter's corrections.

Blochmann's reading is given below. The additions in ordinary brackets are by Maulavi Sahib⁴ —

١ قال السی صلی الله علیه وسلم من بنی مسجدا لله بنی الله له فصر فی الجنة، بنی
المسجد فی عهد سلطان الرمان بالعدل والاحسان عوب الاسلام والمسلمین ناصرالدین والدین ابو
المجاهد محمود ساه السلطان

٢ حلد الله ملکه و سلطانه بنی المسجد الحان الاعظم المعظم الع مجلس حان^٥ (اعلی الله
امرہ وسانہ) فی الباریج^٦ الب والعرین من شهر ربيع الا^٧ [ول سه سب و سعس و سانمانہ ؟]

On verifying this text from its illustration in Maulavi Sahib's corpus of Bengal inscriptions, Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim felt that the above reading is correct except the date. According to him, 'The date upto (ربیع الاول) شهر may be read with some difficulty, though this is also more or less conjectural. The word سانمانہ is also clear but the unit and ten are not at all distinct. The writing here is little mutilated. If it is to be read at all, سس و خمس seems to be a better reading. So in the absence of correct reading of the date and remembering the fact that the Sultan Nasir al din Mahmud Shah of

¹ JASB 1873 p 289 where Blochmann accepts this year in accordance with the chronology of Firuz Shah constructed by him.

² ARIE, 1959 60, No D, 22. It was also then pointed out (*ibid* p 27) that this was thus proved to be the earliest record found or known so far of Mahmūd Shah I.

³ It must be said in fairness to him that Dr 'Abdu'l Karim had to depend upon its published facsimile only, whereas I had much greater benefit of examining its inked rubbings.

⁴ JASB XLII (1873) p 289 plate VII No 3 Shamsu'd Din Ahmad, *op cit* p 141.

⁵ These words left out by Blochmann are read by Maulavi Sahib.

⁶ Shamsu'd Din Ahmad, *op cit*, reads الثالث.

⁷ Maulavi Sahib unlike Blochmann, does not question the reading of the year. According to Blochmann (*ibid*), the date is illegible and he supplied the year in the text in view of the fact that according to the chronological remarks made by me regarding the reign of Firuz Shah we have to place Mahmud Shah's reign in 896, A H (*ibid*). Also, according to him, ربيع is legible.

the inscription does not call himself السلطان ابن السلطان (Sultan son of Sultan), it is logical to attribute the inscription to Nasir al-din Mahmud Shah I¹

The wrong assignment of the inscription had thus resulted from the incorrect decipherment of the date. The year could not be correctly read even by Blochmann, not because, the inscription is, as Maulavi Sahib states, executed in 'crude' *Naskh*. On the contrary, a look at its illustration (pl III c) will show that the epigraph furnishes a fine specimen of the art of writing in the stone inscriptions of Bengal. As a matter of fact, its calligraphy is highly artistic. The curves and strokes of different components of the letters executed artistically reflect great grace and charm and are marked by easy flow in their sweep and contours. But the text defied correct decipherment due to such various factors as weather beaten state of the epigraphical tablet resulting in the letters losing shape and prominence of relief, the highly complicated and intricate *Tughra* or monogrammatic style in which one letter is written upon another with letters of one word interposing those of another, too much use of ligatures even in contravention of the rules of Arabic orthography, etc. This in fact accounts for lack of any serious attempt at providing a correct and complete reading of the text until the recent re examination. For this reason, again, the re examination of Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim has not met with complete success. For, as I shall try to show in the following lines, not only the decipherment of the date suggested by him (not as final, it must be said in fairness to him but preferable) needs correction, but the remaining text even is not complete or correct as certified by him.

Taking the date portion first, I would read the date as في الرابع والعشرين من شهر ربيع الاول (on the date, the 22nd of the month of Rabi'ul-Awwal, A H 847). Now a careful look at the illustration will show that the word سنة is inscribed at the left-bottom of the second line inside the curve of the broken ل of ربيع الاول and exactly above سنة is سبع (correctly read by Dr 'Abdu'l Karim), the point of the right-oriented elongated straightened horizontal arm (normally notched portion) of the letter س extending almost upto the second الف of ربيع الاول, this horizontal part is broken in the middle (which fact probably prevented Blochmann from its correct decipherment). Secondly, across this second الف (i.e الف of اول) and above the elongated straightened arm of س is placed the conjunctive and to its left, beyond the vertical stroke of ل of الاول is the word اربعين in which the part ين has been joined with the letter ر *contrary to rules*, and above it occurs وثمانمائة again with the letter ب joined to ر, again *contrary to rules*. After bearing this in mind, a little concentrated effort will show that the words in the date portion, giving the year are سبع واربعين وثمانمائة that is to say seven and forty and eight hundred or A H 847.

The day of the month also has been wrongly deciphered. It is not اليك والعشرين (i.e 23rd (accepted by Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim also), but اليك والعشرين (i.e 22nd). The confusion arose out of the fact that the ع of ثمانمائة touches ا of اليك to give it the semblance of اليك, but ع may be clearly seen written across the conjunctive و (followed by العشرين), the initial portion of the letter ن, starting from the lower part of the circular portion of و, cuts almost vertically the slightly slanted horizontal curve of the same و, this is thus ثمانمائة.

The date thus comes to ثمانمائة واربعين وثمانمائة or 22nd Rabi' I 847 (20th July 1443).

Before we pass on to the next epigraph, it may be stated that neither Maulavi Sahib nor Dr 'Abdu'l Karim has been able to realise that the text given by the former is *incomplete* Blochmann too who published his reading of the inscription along with its illustration from the rubbing sent by General Cunningham (who also quoted the former's translation in his Report),²

¹ Abdu'l-Karim *op cit* (JASP) p 326, plate II

² Cunningham, *op cit*, p 84

only found its date illegible but did not explain the portions left undeciphered by him. His incomplete reading was sought to be completed by Maulavi Sahib by adding, but not correctly, an invocatory phrase commonly found in inscriptions. There was still considerable portion of the text left undeciphered. While some more portion has been read by me, three or four words very probably containing the name or designation or both, of the builder of the mosque, have defied decipherment, due to the intricate nature of the calligraphy of the record, as explained above.

My reading of the text of the inscription is as follows —

TEXT

Plate III (c)

١ قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من بنى مسجدا لله ^١ تعالى بنى الله له قصرا في الجنة
^٢ في عهد سلطان الرمان بالعدل والاحسان عوب الاسلام والمسلمين ناصر الدنيا والدين ابو المجاهد
 محمود شاه السلطان
 ٢ حلد الله ملكه وسلطانه بنى ^٣ مسجد الحان الاعظم المعظم الع ^٤ سحاجان
 اعلى الله تعالى بالحراب وصانه عن الافات واللباب في التاريخ ^٧ الباي والعشرين من شهر
^٨ ربيع الاول سنة سبع واربعم وثمانم

TRANSLATION

(1) The Prophet, may Allah's salutations and peace be upon him says, 'He who builds a mosque for Allah the Exalted, Allah builds for him a palace in the Paradise'. In the reign of the Sultan of the Time with justice and benevolence, refuge of Islam and the Muslims, Nasirud Dunya wa'd-Din (lit. Helper of the State and the Religion) Abu'l Mujahid (lit. Father of the wagger of the Holy War) Mahmud Shah the Sultan,

(2) may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty, (this) mosque was built by the greatest and most magnificent Khan Ulugh (lit. great) Shuja' Khan (?), may Allah elevate (him) in charities and save him from calamities and misfortunes, on the date, the twenty second of the month of Rabi' u l-Awwal, year (A H) seven and forty and eight hundred (22 Rabi' I 847 = 20 July 1443).

Incidentally, this epigraph stands proved to be the earliest record of Mahmud Shah I. His earliest records so far known were two identical ones occurring on a mosque at Baliaghata in Jangipur (District Murshidabad), bearing the same date, viz. 2nd Ramadan 847 (24th December 1443).⁹ The inscription under study is dated more than five months earlier.

¹ Blochmann in *JASB* 1873 p. 289 and Shamsu d Din Ahmad, *op cit* omit this word.

² Blochmann *loc cit* and Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit*, have before this المسجد بنى of which there is no trace in the rubbing or illustration.

³ Blochmann *loc cit* and Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* read المسجد

⁴ I am not very sure of this reading. Blochmann *loc cit* and Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* read محاسن حان,

⁵ Maulavi Shamsu d Din Ahmad unlike Blochmann *loc cit* p. 289 does not leave any blank here which would only mean that according to him no portion of the text is left unread here.

⁶ *Ibid* reads الله امره وساه

⁷ Blochmann *loc cit* and Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* read respectively الباب واللباب

⁸ Blochmann *loc cit* gives the conjectural reading [ربيع سنة سبع وثمانم] Maulavi Sahib *op cit* follows it but removes the question mark.

⁹ Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* p. 50 Figure 17 *ARIE*, 1975 76 Nos. D 273 74 (where they are listed under Jangipur Mahalla Raghunathganj).

II INSCRIPTION FROM KĀLNĀ (DISTRICT BURDWĀN)

The credit of publishing this inscription first goes to Maulavi Shamsu'd-Din Ahmad. The tablet bearing the record measuring 71 by 36 cm is now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.¹ It was possibly traced by Blochmann at Kalna, a sub divisional headquarters in the district of Burdwan, and was acquired for the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Subsequently, it was transferred to the Indian Museum in 1875 for study and preservation.² Possibly because, the epigraph was in a bad state of preservation, its decipherment was not attempted by any scholar till 1933 when Maulavi Shamsu'd Din Ahmad studied and edited it for this series.³ Subsequently, he included it in his corpus of Bengal inscriptions.

When I published the inscriptions of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, in a previous issue of this journal,⁴ I had left out this record, along with those that were earlier published in this series (which normally vouchsafes correct decipherment to the extent possible). But on account of its calligraphy, which while conforming in outlines of its scriptal form to that of contemporary Bengal inscriptions, is rather so unlike it in the usual artistic arrangement and ornamental flourishes, I had doubts in my mind as regards to its correct assignment. Subsequently, I satisfied myself, on verification of the text with the impression as well as the epigraphical tablet, that the record is wrongly ascribed to Mahmud Shah II and that in fact it refers to the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. But my pre occupation prevented any further action in the matter, till quite a few years later when I was invited to attend the annual session of the Bangla Desh Itihas Parishad at Dacca in 1973. It was then included in the paper I prepared for the same. Subsequently, it was listed in the Survey's epigraphical report.⁵

No doubt, the epigraph is in a bad state of preservation. But the text is neither as indistinct in many places as alleged,⁶ nor too damaged to admit of clear decipherment, as has been tried to make out.⁷ However, the writing has lost prominence of relief. Added to it is the rather longish text on a limited lithic surface, resulting in close-written matter in two lines, instead of the normal one line, in a panel. These factors have perhaps posed a challenge to its correct decipherment, resulting, as shall be explained presently, in its initial wrong assignment to Nasiru'd Din Mahmud Shah II.⁸ It was again due to these reasons that Dr 'Abdu'l Karim who re examined this inscription from the published facsimile in Maulavi Sahib's work, was also misled to make the matters worse by assigning it to Ruknu'd-Din Barbak Shah.⁹

Maulavi Sahib's reading is as under —

۱. الله لا اله الا هو الحي الموم لا ناحده سه و لا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض
من دى الذى سفع عنده الا ناده يعلم
۲. ما نس اندبهم وما حلفهم ولا يحطون سى من علمه الا بما ساء وسع كرسه السموات
والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما و هو العلى العظم
۳. لا اكراه في الدين قد نس الرسد من العلى من تكمر بالطاعوت و نوس نانه هـ
اسمى ك بالعروه الوصى لانسقام لها والله

¹ *ARIE* 1975-76 No D 265

² Shamsu'd Din Ahmad *op cit* p 138

³ *Epigraphia Indo-Moslemica (EIM)* 1933 34 pp 12 pl I a

⁴ *Epigraphia Indica Arabic and Persian Supplement* 1955 and 1956 pp 132 pls I-VIII

⁵ *ARIE*, 1975-76, No D 265 and Introduction

⁶ 'Abdu'l Karim, *op cit* (*JASP*) p 321

⁷ Shamsu'd Din Ahmad, *op cit* p 139 Figure 32

⁸ *Ibid*

⁹ 'Abdu'l Karim, *op cit* (*JASP*), p 322

سمیع علم—بنی هذا المسجد دول حان ابن حسن حان—فی عهد السلطان ابن
السلطان ناصرالدین والدین ابو (المجاهد) محمود شاه نادرشاه عاری—جلد الله ملكه و سلطانه—فی
البارج سه خمس و تسع و ثمانه —

According to the above, Daulat Khan son of Husain Khan built a congregational mosque in the reign of the Sultan, son of Sultan, Nasirud Dunya wa'd-Din Abu'l (Mujahid) Mahmud Shah in A H 895 (1489 A D) ¹

Maulavi Sahib thus takes this record to be dated A H 895 (1489 90 A D) in the reign of Mahmud Shah II, whose titles 'in this inscription correspond to those in his other inscriptions and coins' ² Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim did not agree with this and felt that the 'reading of the 4th line does not seem to be free from doubt. He dubs the reading of the words ناصرالدین والدین as 'definitely conjectural' According to him, 'above the words read as نادرشاه عاری, the word السلطان is very distinct, and before this word, the words بارک شاه are also very distinct' He goes on to add that 'the words read as ناصرالدین والدین are actually السلطان ابن السلطان' and 'in the words representing the date nothing except the word سه may be satisfactorily read' After 'having examined the epigraph afresh', Dr 'Abdu'l Karim was 'forced to conclude that the epigraph belongs to the reign of Rukn al-din Barbak Shah and not to the reign of Mahmud Shah (Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah II)' and suggested the following reading of the 4th line of the epigraph ³

بنی هذا المسجد دول حان ابن حسن حان فی عهد السلطان ابن السلطان
بارک شاه السلطان جلد الله ملكه و سلطانه

According to this, Daulat Khan son of Husain Khan built this mosque in the reign of Barbak Shah

Another point that Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim tried to make was in regard to the identification of the builder Husain Khan. According to him, one Khan i-Mu'azzam Daulat Khan is mentioned in an inscription of Jalalu'd Din Fath Shah with lofty titles, and though 'there is no positive proof to say that Daulat Khan of the two inscriptions are one and the same person. If, however, they are identified to be one and the same person, which is very probable, it may be suggested that the inscription discussed here in this article was of earlier origin than that of Fath Shah' Again, he felt that since 'in the inscription under study, Daulat Khan is not given a lofty title and he seems to have been holding a smaller rank whereas in the inscription of the time of Fath Shah he is given lofty titles', it would mean that 'when the inscription under study was being issued, Daulat Khan was holding an ordinary rank, and that later in the reign of Fath Shah, he was elevated to a high position', it would therefore follow that 'the present inscription must have been issued prior to the reign of Fath Shah' Dr 'Abdu'l Karim tried to clinch the issue by pointing out that 'the reading of the name of the king as Barbak Shah confirms this view' ⁴

Unfortunately, both Maulavi Sahib and Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim have not been able to decipher correctly the fourth line of the text containing the historical portion. Before discussing the text, it would be better to give my reading of this portion⁵ —

¹ Shamsu d Din Ahmad, *op cit*

² *Ibid*

³ 'Abdu'l Karim *op cit* (JASP), pp 321 22

⁴ *Ibid*, p 322

⁵ The text preceding this is the Quranic text *Āyatul Kursi* (Qur'an, Chapter II verses 255 56) and has been quoted above in Maulavi Shamsu'd Din Ahmad's reading

TEXT

Plate IV (a)

بني¹ هذا المسجد دول حان ابن حسن حان في² عمل السلطان ابن السلطان³ ناصر الدنيا والدن
 اورنگ ساه⁴ نادر شاه عاري حلد الله ملكه و سلطانه⁵ و نمفها في الخارج سه⁷ الف نمانس

TRANSLATION

This mosque was built by Daulat Khan son of Husain Khan in the reign of the Sultan son of the Sultan Nasirud Dunya wa'd-Din (lit Helper of the Religion and the State) Aurang Shah Badshah Ghazi, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty And this was written on the date, the year (A H) one thousand and eighty (A H 1080= 1669 70 A D)

In other words, the inscription is dated A H 1080 (1669-70 A D) in the reign of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb

A comparison of the above reading with those of Maulavi Sahib and Dr 'Abdu'l Karim will show that the former's reading upto (and before) اورنگ ساه has two errors as indicated in the foot notes and that the latter repeating the second of the two errors, had failed to spot the regal titles ناصر الدنيا والدن which is rather surprising as the phrase is quite clear in the impression it will be observed that immediately to the left of the طا of السلطان occurs با, to its left, below, is صر and above, الد, to the left of الد, above, is اسا (الف in which is for الدس), and below, و, to the left of الد is لا and to the left of و is ن thus, we have ناصر الدنيا والدن

Further to the left is اورنگ ساه Maulavi Sahib takes the first part of this name او as او, but fails to decipher the remaining part, whereas Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim fails to decipher the first part, but though he is almost on the right trail to the correct decipherment of the word in spotting the *markaz* of ك, he reads it as ريك (to conform to his ريك), instead of ريك, the dot (*nuqta*) of ن in which is absolutely clear in the illustration The letters of اورنگ may be clearly seen above the دن of الدس—the الف of اورنگ being immediately to the left of ن of الدس The شاه of شاه is written across the گ of اورنگ and ه to its left below the اف of سا and almost touching the tip of ك The name اورنگ ساه is thus clear

In other words, there is absolutely no doubt about the reading ناصر الدنيا والدن اورنگ شاه

Again, it will be observed that Maulavi Sahib has read نادر شاه after the name of the king, which, according to Dr 'Abdu'l Karim, is a misreading for السلطان The fact is that Maulavi Sahib's reading is quite correct It will be observed on verification with the illustration that below ه of اورنگ شاه, the letters با are quite clear, and to their left, the letter د and above it, شا with three dots, and above the last-mentioned and below its dots, the letter ه can be clearly seen To the left of د and almost touching it is عاري of which ي is just below حلد coming immediately thereafter in the text There is absolutely no trace of السلطان in this part of the text as read by Dr 'Abdu'l-Karim

Lastly, the date portion Maulavi Sahib gives the reading of the year as خمس و تسعين و باهائيه (eight hundred and ninetyfive) According to Dr 'Abdu'l Karim,⁸ 'in the words representing

¹ Shamsu d Din Ahmad, *op cit* p 139 reads هذا المسجد there is only one الف

² *Ibid* and Abdu'l-Karim *op cit* (JASP) p 322 read عهد

³ Abdu'l Karim, *op cit* (JASP) has left this portion unread

⁴ Shamsu d Din Ahmad reads نادر شاه (المجاهد) ابو (earlier in *EIM* 1933 34 p 2 he had doubtfully read the *kunya* as ابوالمجاهد) Abdu'l Karim *op cit* (JASP) reads نارنگ ساه

⁵ Abdu'l Karim *op cit* (JASP) reads السلطان

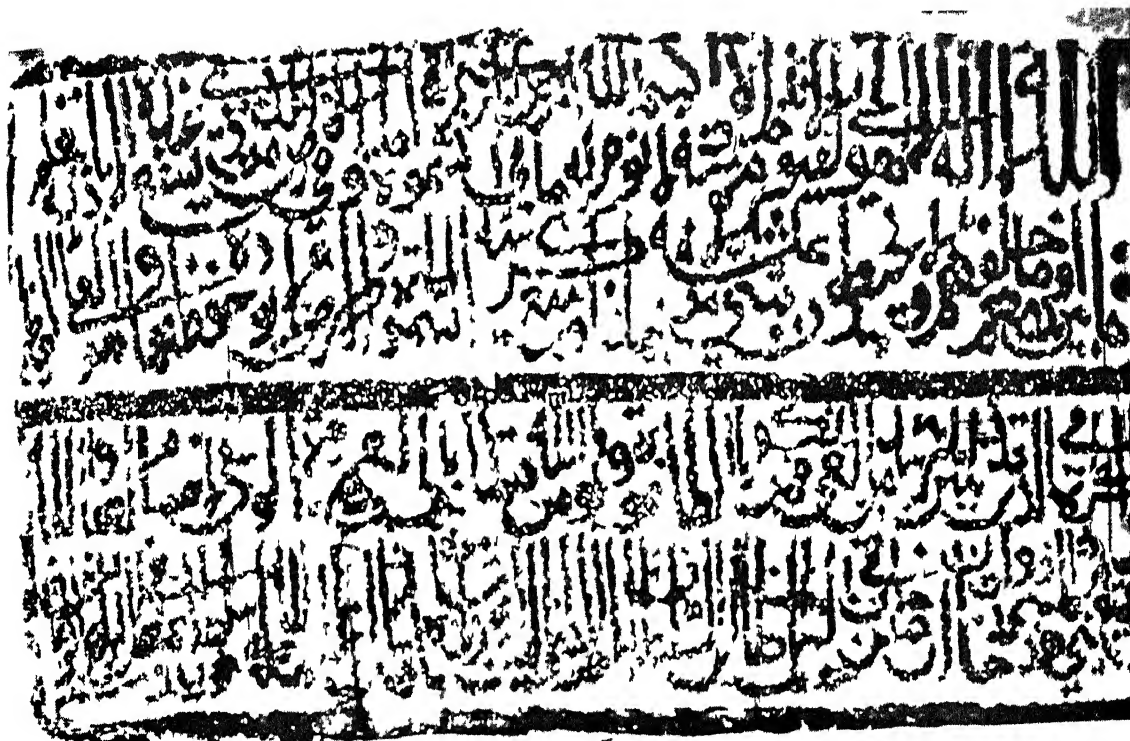
⁶ *Ibid* omits to read this and the remaining text Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* also does not read these two words.

⁷ Shamsu d Din Ahmad, *op cit* reads خمس و تسعين و ثمانمائة

⁸ Abdu'l-Karim, *op cit* (JASP) p 322.

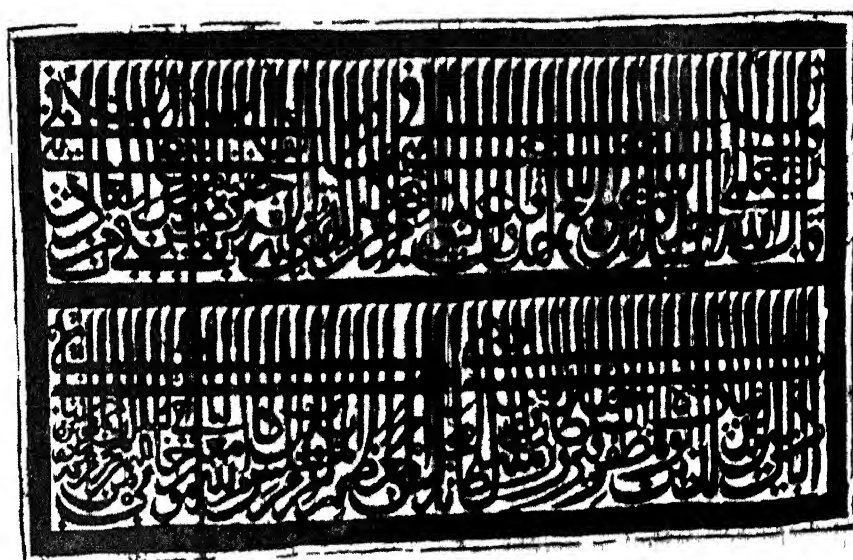
SO CALLED INSCRIPTIONS OF NĀSIRU D DĪN MAHMŪD II—CONTD

(a) Inscription, dated A H 1080, from Kalna (now at Calcutta) (p 34)



SCAIR 25

(b) Inscription, dated A H 896, from Chunakhali (p 40)



SCALE 5

the date, nothing except the word *سنة* may be satisfactorily read' This is not correct It is true that the illustration is not very distinct but is not so indistinct either to admit no reading except one word as alleged At the same time Maulavi Sahib's reading here is certainly conjectural and not supported by the impression or illustration The date which is incidentally that of writing as will be shown presently is given in words as *الف ثمانى* (one thousand eighty)¹ The concluding portion of the text (after *سلطانہ*) indicating the date of writing according to me should be read *و بممها في التاريخ سنة الف ثمانى* It will be seen that the letter *و* occurs at the left bottom of the line between *سلطانہ* of *سلطانہ* (which itself is written below *طا*) and *سنة* To the left of the said *طا* and above *و* the word *بممها* (i.e. written by) with the *الف* of its *ها* placed between *ا* and *ل* of *التاريخ* may be clearly seen and above it, the word *في* with its second letter *ي* placed horizontally across the letters *سلطانہ* To the left of *في* and *بممها* is the word *التاريخ* which is quite clear To the left of this and above *سنة* of *سنة* is the word *الف* of which the ligature joining *ف* with *ل* has not come out in full ink in the impression Above this *ف*, occurs the letters *با* and above it placed across the two strokes of *الف* is *س* with clear two dots immediately below it thus giving the word *ثمانى* In short, the date portion can be correctly read beyond any doubt is *و بممها في التاريخ سنة الف ثمانى* 'And it was written on the date, year (A H) thousand (and) eighty (A H 1080=1669-70 A D)'

Thus, there should be absolutely no doubt that the inscription neither belongs to Nasirud Din Mahmud II as stated by Maulavi Sahib nor to Barbak Shah, as suggested by Dr Abdu'l Karim, but to the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, both on account of the clear mention of the name 'Aurang Shah' and the year A H 1080, as shown above Moreover, the phrase *Badshah Ghazi* which was, as seen above, correctly deciphered by Maulavi Sahib should have rung a bell of warning for as the scholars and students of Indian history are aware, this phrase is used only in the inscriptions (and also coins) of the Mughal emperors and never in the lithic records of the Bengal Sultans This alone was a sufficient ground for its assignment to a Mughal emperor

It is true that the text calls Aurangzeb as Aurang Shah and gives his regal title as Nasirud-Dunya wa d Din instead of his official title Muhyiud-Dunya wa'd-Din² But this appears to be a mistake on the part of the author of the text Such errors are not so rare in the lithic records of India³ Even if that were not the case, the clear mention of the name and the date conclusively proves it to be a record of Aurangzeb

¹ In my paper (*Proceedings Third History Congress Dacca* p 48), I had expressed the view that the year is either A H 1088 or A H 1080 However the reading of the year A H 1080 was confirmed in *ARIE* 1975 76 No D 265

² It was the title Nasirud Dunya wa d Din that misled Maulavi Sahib to assign it to Mahmud Shah II

³ For example *ARIF* 1962 63 No D 208 (using *Shihabu d Din* for Aurangzeb) *ibid*, 1973 74 No D, 5 (using *Zahiru d Din* for Akbar)

THE SO-CALLED CHUNAKHALI INSCRIPTION OF NASIRUD-DIN MAHMUD SHAH II OF BENGAL

BY DR Z A DESAI

Nobody has so far challenged the generally accepted claim that Nasirū'd-Dīn Mahmūd Shah II ruled over Bengal for some months—for six months according to some¹ and for about a year according to others²—during A H 895 896 (1490-91 A D), though his antecedents are surrounded in mystery. His very existence was first indicated by some late sixteenth century historical works of the Mughal period which incidentally give a hopelessly incorrect chronology of the Bengal Sultans, particularly of the Ilyas Shah rulers and their immediate successors. Subsequently, the evidence of coins and inscriptions was cited to prove beyond doubt that Mahmūd Shah II did actually rule over Bengal³.

As to the numismatic evidence, I feel it has been conclusively shown by Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm that no extant coin specimen can be assigned to Mahmūd Shah II beyond any doubt, and the few coins that have been attributed to him by scholars are actually issues of one of his predecessors and namesake Nasirū'd-Dīn Mahmūd Shah I⁴. This leaves epigraphical evidence which comprises three inscriptions believed to be his⁵. These are one each from Hazrat Pandua (District Malda), Kalna (District Burdwan) and Chunakhali (District Murshidabad), all in West Bengal⁶. It was again Dr 'Abdu'l-Karīm who attempted a fresh examination of these three epigraphs, to prove that they also do not belong to him but to other kings. While he correctly challenged their ascription to Mahmūd Shah II, he erred in assigning the Kalna inscription to Ruknu'd-Dīn Barbak Shah (1459-74) and in reading the date of the Hazrat Pandua inscription⁷. It will be recalled that these two epigraphs were also shown, in a paper read by me at the Third Session of the Bangla Desh Itihas Parishad, Dacca, in 1973, to have been wrongly ascribed to this Mahmūd Shah II, while in fact, they refer to the reigns, respectively, of Nasirū'd-Dīn Mahmūd I (1442-59)⁸ and Mughal emperor Aurangzeb (1658-1707)⁹. About the third record, from Chunakhali (of which no illustration had till

¹ Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm, A Fresh Examination of the Inscriptions Attributed to Mahmud Shah, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan (JASP)*, Dacca vol XIII No 3 (April, 1968), p 320

² Nizamu d Dīn Ahmad, *Tabaqat i Akbari* vol III (Calcutta, 1935) p 269 *Firishta, Tarikh i Firishta* (Kānpur 1884) pp 300-01, Ghulam Husain Salm, *Riyadu s Salatin* (Calcutta 1890), p 127. They all place his reign in A H 899 900

³ Sir Jadu-Nāth Sarkar *The History of Bengal* vol II (Dacca, 1948), pp 139 40

⁴ Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm, *Corpus of the Muslim Coins of Bengal* (Dacca 1960), pp 173 76

⁵ According to Sarkar *op cit*, p 140. Epigraphic records dated in 895/1490 and 896/1491, however confirm the statement of the *Tabaqat* that he reigned for one year.

⁶ Maulavi Shamsu'd-Dīn Ahmad *Inscriptions of Bengal* vol IV (Rajshahi, 1960), pp 138-42

⁷ 'Abdu'l Karīm, *op cit*, pp 323-26

⁸ I read its date as A H 847 (1443 A D) as against A H 857 (1453 A D) read by Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm, *op cit* (JASP), p 426

⁹ *Proceedings of the Third History Congress Dacca 1973 Bangla Desh Itihas Parishad* (Dacca, 1975), pp 84 90. When that paper was written I had not seen Dr 'Abdu'l-Karīm's article (JASP), nor did any delegate present in the Congress (which was not attended by Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm) mention it. Some of Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm's views in the matter need modification as has been shown separately in a revised and enlarged version of that paper being published elsewhere in this issue (pp 26 35).

now been published), I had then expressed my strong doubt¹ that it may not belong to Nasirud-Din Mahmūd Shah II, but I had refrained from making any categorical identification, as I had not been able to lay my hands upon its facsimile or impression

Dr 'Abdu'l Karīm, after an examination of the available material (solely comprising its translation published in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, 1893, on the basis of the rubbing received by the Society from Mr H Beveridge which assigned it to Saifu d Dīn Firūz (1487-90) and its 'tentative' text and translation published by Maulavi Shamsu'd Dīn Ahmad assigning it to Nasirud-Din Mahmūd Shah II) opined that until fresh evidence is available and until the facsimile of this inscription can be verified the reading of the Philological Secretary should be accepted and the inscription assigned to the time of Saifu'd Dīn Firuz Shah²

Having procured an inked rubbing of this epigraph, which fortunately exists at the same place where it was spotted almost a century back, I am now in a position to show once for all that the Chunakhali record belongs to Saifu d Dīn Firūz Shah only and has nothing to do with the so called Mahmūd Shah II. The same is being edited here and illustrated for the benefit of scholars. It is hoped that it will now set to rest any doubt that may exist in regard to its correct attribution

The tablet bearing the record measuring 29 by 60 cm is fixed into the southern wall of a modest Tomb locally said to be of a saint called Masnad Auliya which is situated in a field between two mosques in adjoining fields at Ghauspara-Nishat-Bagh about three kilometres to the north of Chunakhali village and half a kilometre or so to the east south east of the Berhampore Murshidabad Road—approximately 7 kilometres from the former (which is the district headquarters)³. It seems to have been first found in 1893,⁴ and its contents described in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1893 from a rubbing received from Mr Henry Beveridge thus

"A translation of an inscription in the Tughra characters by Henry Beveridge, Esq, C S.—Verily God the Most High said, 'Mosques belong unto Himself Ascribe Godhead to none else.' The Prophet,—blessed be his memory,—said, 'Whoever erects a mosque in this world, for him God will raise up seventy palaces in Paradise.' This mosque was erected—in the reign of Sufud dunia O Dcem Abool Mozaffar Feroze Shah, the just, the munificent, may he be spared to reign long—by his grand vizir, may God ever elevate him high. This engraving was done on the 2nd of mohorrum 896 Hijra (Sunday, Nov 15th, 1490, A C O S.)

¹ My doubts were based on the unusual way in which it was republished and assigned to Mahmud Shah II by Maulavi Shamsu'd Dīn Ahmad (*op cit* pp 140-41) though its published English version which formed the only basis of Maulavi Shāhib's notice clearly recorded the name of the reigning monarch as Firuz Shah along with his regal titles Saifu d Dīn Firuz Shah (*Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal PASB*, 1893 p 55)

² Abdul Karīm, *op cit* (JASP), p 325

³ *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* 1974-75 No 362 of Appendix D. Nothing is known about this saint. The plain building of his Tomb is also quite late. There is one more epigraph fixed in the southern wall of the Tomb which refers to the grave of Sulṭān Muhammad son of Fath Muhammad son of Ilaḥdad Multani who died in A H 1158/1745 A D (*ibid* No D 363). If this epigraph is *in situ* (and it does appear to be so) it would provide the correct name of the person buried here.

⁴ According to Dr Abdul Karīm *op cit* (JASP), p 323 it was discovered in 1873 which does not appear to be correct. The year 1873 is also given in Shamsu'd Dīn Ahmad *op cit*, p 140 where no authority is cited. The copy of the *PASB*, 1873 consulted by me, does not contain any reference to or notice of this epigraph. The 1873 in Shamsu'd Dīn Ahmad *op cit*, is an obvious misprint or slip of pen. The notice of the inscription, containing the English version of the text, is to be found in *PASB*, 1893 p 55 only but there the statement of Maulavi Shamsu'd Dīn Ahmad that the Philological Secretary exhibited a rubbing of the inscription in the Tughra character received from Mr Beveridge does not occur. Perhaps there has been some mix up in the notes of Maulavi Shāhib.

This piece of Stone, which has the above inscription in *Tughra* form, a kind of Calligraphy in Arabic, was found at the Musnud-i awlia (Sanctum Sanctorum) of the apostles of Islam at Choonā Khali in the district of Murshidabad, adjoining to the Court house once presided over by Jafar Khan Nasairi, otherwise called Muhsin Khan Zindapir (the immortal saint)'.¹

Maulavi Shamsu d Din Ahmad was the first to take a detailed notice of the above note of the *Proceedings*. It is rather inexplicable that this extremely valuable record, as has been rightly pointed out by Maulavi Sahib, was not properly studied nor were its text and facsimile published, in any subsequent issue of the Asiatic Society's journal. Even more surprising and not less intriguing is the claim, despite this, of Maulavi Sahib that subsequent research has proved that the record belongs to Nasirud-Din Mahmud Shah II and not to Saifud-Din Firoz Shah to whom it was assigned by the Philological Secretary of the Asiatic Society'.² Significantly, he does not give any details or even bare particulars, of any such research. In the absence of any useful information and in view of his own assertion that the epigraph was neither properly studied nor published (that is to say with its illustration), it is difficult to find any valid basis for this claim. Moreover, Maulavi Sahib himself had not seen the facsimile nor the original inscription and yet he presumes that the reading of the record seems to be erroneous and the English rendering faulty in many places and therefore, 'it is conclusively proved on numismatic and epigraphical evidences that in 896 A H (1490 A C) Mahmud Shah II was on the throne of Bengal',³ and as such Beveridge's reading of Firoz Shah's name in the inscription may be taken as conjectural, or, it was perhaps due to the defect in the inscription tablet'.⁴

More intriguing still, Maulavi Sahib not only assigns the inscription to Nasirud-Din Mahmud Shah II, but he also proceeds to give 'a tentative version' of the text as follows⁵ —

قال الله تعالى ان المساجد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا—قال النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم من
 بنى مسجدا في الدنيا بنى الله له سبعين قصرا في الجنة—بنى المسجد في عهد السلطان ابن السلطان
 ناصر الدنيا والدن ابوالمجاهد محمود شاه سلطان العادل النادل حلد الله ملكه و سلطانه—بنى وزير
 و سر لشكر—اعلى الله امره و سانه—في التاريخ بنى المحرم سنة ٨٩٦ و سبعين و ثمانمائة الهجرية

Apparently, Maulavi Sahib has reconstructed⁶ the above Arabic text from its published English translation, replacing the name and titles of Saifu'd-Din Firuz Shah by those of Mahmud Shah II.

The inscriptional tablet is even now, and was, therefore at that time too, in a fine state of preservation and the writing also, though executed in the intricate typical *Tughra* calligraphic style of Bengal, is perfectly legible. It is difficult to speculate what made Maulavi Sahib think

¹ *PASB*, 1893 p 55. Cf. Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* p 140 who also puts in quotes the statement that it is of value as it seems to be the only evidence we have to prove that the reign of Saifud Din Abul Muzaffar Firoz Shah II extended into 896 A H. This is absent in *PASB* 1893.

² Shamsu'd Din Ahmad *op cit*, p 140.

³ The argument of Dr. Abdul Karim, *op cit* (*JASP*) p 324 that now a days these grounds (i.e. all the coins attributed to Mahmud Shah II have now been found to have been actually issued by Mahmud Shah I) do not hold good is beside the point. For even in that case there could have been an epigraph of that monarch. Conversely even if the coins were Mahmud Shah II's issues the assignment of this or any inscription to Mahmud Shah II without verifying its text would be against all canons of historical research.

⁴ Shamsu d Din Ahmad, *op cit* pp 140-41.

⁵ *Ibid* p 141.

⁶ A word of caution against such reconstruction may not be out of place here. A comparison of the actual text given below with that reconstructed by Maulavi Shamsu d Din Ahmad from Beveridge's translation—the differences have been indicated in the footnotes—will bring home the futility of any such attempt even in case of the almost stereotype texts of Arabic inscriptions of Bengal.

that Beveridge (who, it may be recalled, has translated the *Akbar Nāma* of Abu'l-Fadl and is author of a number of articles and books based on original Persian sources, and who could have, if necessary, taken help of local Arabic scholars), had committed such a glaring mistake in the reading of the name and titles of the king, all the more so in view of totally different set of the names and titles of the two kings

From the actual text given below and its illustration, it is abundantly clear that the published English translation is quite correct as far as the name and titles of the king, the date and most of the extraneous details in the text are concerned and therefore the assessment too of the importance of the inscription attributed by Maulavī Sahīb to the *PASB*, that 'it extends the reign of that king into the year A H 896' will be easily recognised to be perfectly reasonable. Even otherwise, Maulavī Sahīb's argument that because Naṣīru'd-Dīn Mahmud Shah II was on the throne in A H 896, there can be no inscription of his predecessor (or for that matter successor) is untenable unless it is supported by indisputable evidence of his being on the throne from the *first* to the *last* day of that year. This evidence is lacking. Even taking for granted that the two other inscriptions which Maulavī Sahīb believes to be of Mahmūd Shah II, are correctly dated A H 896, it may be noted that the Hazrat Pandua record is dated 23rd of the month of Rabi' u'l-Awwal (the third month of the year) and the Kalna one does not specify the month. So it cannot be held that these two epigraphs (even if they belonged to him), precluded the extension of Saifu'd Dīn Firūz's rule into the year A H 896, for they would not cover so called Mahmud Shah II's rule from the initial to the 23rd Rabi'I of that year. As to his so called coins also, presuming for a moment that they were issued by him, they do not support this thesis for the simple reason that no dated coin of his has been recorded and even if there were one, no one could have said for certain in which month or part of the year it was issued, as coin-legends as a rule do not quote day and month. As to the historical sources, leaving aside the fact that they are much later and full of hopeless mistakes of chronology, they too do not specify that Mahmūd Shah II's one-year rule synchronised with the entire span—the very first to the last day—of the year A H 896. In other words, there is no basis whatsoever for treating the reading of the name of Firūz Shah as conjectural, or the inscription having some defect, as claimed by Maulavī Sahīb, even if we make allowance for considering the numismatic, epigraphical and historical evidence as genuine or correct (which it is not).

It is likewise not correct to say that Beveridge's reading is erroneous or his rendering faulty in many places. The only mistake of consequence is that the name of the builder Majlisu'l Mu'azzam translated by him as the 'Grand vizir', which I read as Majlis Barbak, was not read by him. On his part, Maulavī Sahīb too did not improve upon Beveridge's reading of the portion containing the builder's name and titles.

In short, the following reading of the text which can be verified by its facsimile proves once for all that Naṣīru'd Dīn Mahmūd Shah II has nothing to do with the Chunakhali inscription. Therefore, with the other two inscriptions also having been proved to be wrongly ascribed to him, it should now be absolutely certain that there is no epigraphical evidence whatsoever to support the rule of Naṣīru'd-Dīn Mahmūd Shah II in Bengal.

The two-line text starts with the famous Quranic verse occurring in mosque-epigraphs, followed by the equally frequently appearing Tradition stressing the merit of constructing a place for Allah's worship. Then follows the historical portion stating that 'this' mosque was built in the time of the just and munificent king Saifu'd-Dunya wa d Dīn Abu'l-Muzaḥḥar Firūz Shah the Sultan, by the great and respected Majlis, Majlis Barbak. The epigraph was inscribed on the 2nd Muharram 896 (15th November 1490) by which date presumably the mosque was completed.

Since the inscription records the construction of a mosque, the tablet is obviously not *in situ*. It is difficult to trace or determine the whereabouts of the mosque to which the inscription originally belonged. The two mosques in the neighbourhood are late structures, and the tablet does not appear to have belonged to any of these.

The epigraph is remarkable for its intricate style of writing the typical 'Bengal *Tughra*' of Bow and-Arrow variety. The calligraphy is quite pleasing, however it is more artistic in arrangement than the formation of its individual letters. The script is *Thulth* with marked traits of *Bihār*. The text is accommodated in two horizontal panels. The vertical strokes of the letters in each panel have been raised to the top and arranged parallel to one another with shorter strokes of *alifs* thrown in between, while their curves occupy just less than half of the panel. The parallel strokes in the first panel are further crossed with elongated arms of the words "فے" and "نئے" artistically arranged to match with a similar arrangement formed by the placing across of the *markaz* of the letter "ک" in the second panel. In the arrangement of the curves too, the designer has attempted some artistic arrangement like symmetrical diagonal placing of their stretched parts or arches. But on the whole, he has failed to achieve that high standard of decorative *Tughra* which is the high water mark of some inscriptions from this region.¹ This is due to the not so perfect calligraphy itself which though pleasing, is not exquisite. The strokes and curves, particularly the latter, do not give evidence of calligraphical excellence of symmetrical drawing, lacking as they do the grace and easy flow in the examples referred to above. This defect denies the composition its anticipated highly artistic effect. Nevertheless, the epigraph does deserve to be ranked among the notable specimens of Indian mural calligraphy.

The text of the epigraph has been read as under —

TEXT

Plate IV (b)

۱ قال الله تعالى^۲ و ان المساحد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا و قال السی^۳ عليه السلام
من بنى مسجدا في الدنيا بنى الله له سبعين فصرا في الجنة بنى^۴ هذا المسجد في^۵ ريس السلطان
العادل^۶

۲ البادل سيف الدنيا والدن ابو المطهر فرور ساه^۷ السلطان حلد الله ملكه و سلطانه
۳ مجلس المعظم المكرم مجلس ناربك^۸ ادام الله معالنا^{۱۰} مورجا^{۱۱} في^{۱۲} البانی^{۱۳} من الشهر المحرم سنة ست
و سبعين^{۱۴} و سمانه

¹ Shamsu'd Din Ahmad, *op cit* Figures 2, 10 12 14, 24 26 33, 36 37 etc

² Shamsu d Din Ahmad, *op cit*, p 141, omits

³ *Ibid* reads صلى الله عليه وسلم

⁴ *Ibid* omits

⁵ *Ibid* reads عهد

⁶ *Ibid* reads ابن السلطان ناصر الدنيا والدن ابوالمجاهد محمود شاه

⁷ *Ibid* reads السلطان followed by السلطان

⁸ *Ibid* reads نای ورنرو سر لشکر

⁹ *Ibid* reads اعلى الله امره و سانه

¹⁰ *Ibid* omits

¹¹ *Ibid* reads, after this word, الباریح

¹² *Ibid* reads ثانی

¹³ *Ibid* omits

¹⁴ *Ibid* has, after this word, الهجره

TRANSLATION

(1) Allah the Exalted has said And verily, the mosques are for Allah, (hence) invoke not any one else with Allah ' ¹ And the Prophet, on him be peace, has said, "He who builds a mosque in the world, Allah builds for him seventy palaces in Paradise" This mosque was constructed in the time of the Sultan, the just (and)

(2) the munificent, Saifu'd-Dunya wa'd-Din (lit Sword of the State and the Religion) Abu'l Muẓaffar (lit Father of the Victorious) Firūz Shah, the Sultan, may Allah perpetuate his kingdom and sovereignty, by the magnificent and respected Majlis, Majlis Barbak, may Allah perpetuate his glories ¹ Written on the second of the month of Muharram, year (A H) six and ninety and eight hundred (2 Muharram 896=15 November 1490)

Neither Beveridge nor Maulavi Sahib had read the name of the builder Majlis Barbak who is referred to in the text as the greatest and most respected Majlis The title Majlis is extensively and almost exclusively used in the inscriptions of Bengal ² Very few scholars are aware that more than half a century back, the term was sought to be explained, but unsatisfactorily I tried to bring the exact connotation of the terms *Majlis* and *Masnad* to the notice of scholars for the first time some time back, but of this too, few scholars seem to be aware This note may, therefore, perhaps bear repetition here "The titles *Masnad i Ali*, *Majlis*, etc are frequently met with in inscriptions as well as historical works, but nowhere these have been properly explained In one place, for example, the title *Masnad i Ali* is stated to mean the 'great-prop' (*Epig Indo-Mosl*, 1933 34, p 9) Dr [Ghulam] Yazdani (*ibid*, 1915 16, p 13, fn 3) tried to explain the terms thus 'The titles *Majlis*, *Masnad*, *Ṣadr*, etc all mean *Sāhib i Majlis*, *Sāhib-i Masnad*, i.e Lord of the assembly, Lord of the throne, Lord of the seat of honour, etc' The clue to their exact connotation is provided in the Arabic history of Gujarat While explaining these titles, Hajji Dabir states that 'and it is the custom of the men of this country to entitle the king's deputy (*nā ibū l Muṭlaq*) as *Masnad-i-'Alī* and the minister (*Wazir*) as *Majlis i-'Alī* and he who is permitted to take a seat in the presence of the king is given the title *Majlis* to which a term in apposition to his (status) is appended *Zafaru l Wāliḥ*, vol II (London, 1921), p 613" ³

This would show that the title *Majlis* was usually enjoyed by a member of the king's council or in other words by a minister or a man of equal rank According to this definition, our Majlis Barbak, the builder of the mosque, may have been the Royal Chamberlain, if Barbak is taken to indicate the designation On the other hand, it is not unlikely that Barbak was his name According to one account, the name of the Abyssinian noble who killed Sultan Jalalu'd Din Fath Shah (1481-1487) and ascended the throne under the name Sultan Shahzada was Barbak ⁴ But since this Barbak *alias* Sultan Shahzada was put to death by another Abyssinian noble Malik Andil—none other than Saifu'd-Din Firuz Shah of our inscription, the identification of that Barbak with our Majlis Barbak would not be possible

In any case, it is possible to identify Majlis Barbak with some amount of certainty In the Depara (District Hooghly) inscription (now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta), dated A H

¹ *Qur an*, Chapter LXXII verse 18

² It may be significant to note that this title is found used first in inscriptions of Bengal only in the middle of the 15th century Inscriptions and chronicles of other areas use the terms *Masnad i Ali* and *Masnad i Grami*

³ *Epigraphia Indica Arabic and Persian Supplement (EIAPS)*, 1955 and 1956, p 53 fn 3

⁴ *Ghulam Husain Salim, op cit* p 120 According to Firishṭa *op cit*, p 299 (followed by Sarkār, *op cit*, p 138), Shahzada assumed the title Barbak Shah on ascending the throne

899 (1494 A D), of 'Alau'd Din Husain Shah, the earliest of that monarch to be found so far one Majlisu l-Majalis Barbak is said to have built a mosque there ¹ Another epigraph of the same king, originally from Kalna (District Burdwan) and now in the Indian Museum Calcutta recording the construction of a mosque in A H 918 (1512 A D) by one Majlis Jatwar, refers to the time of Majlisu l Mu'azzam Majlis Barbak ² The inscription under study dated A H 896 (1490 A D) calls him Majlisu'l Mu'azzamu l-Mukarram Majlis Barbak This would indicate that Majlisu l Mu'azzam [u'l-Mukarram] Majlis Barbak of the Chunakhali epigraph and Majlisu'l Mu'azzam Majlis Barbak of the Kalna record are very probably one and the same person It is almost certain that he is also identical with Majlisu l Majalis Barbak of the Depara inscription, dated only four years later than the Chunakhali record If so it would mean that Majlis Barbak continued to enjoy the high office from A H 896 (1490 A D) to A H 918 (1512 A D)

In conclusion, from the above study, it is absolutely clear that the epigraph furnishes a lithic record of Saifu'd Din Firuz Shah, proves that Firuz continued to occupy the throne at least till the second day of the first month of the year A H 896,³ and provides the name of a high dignitary of the Sultan's reign, his Chamberlain or Minister

This epigraph thus adds one more to the number of Firuz Shah's records so far known to scholars It is a curious coincidence that just as this inscription of his was wrongly assigned to another Sultan, he has been given credit for an inscription which was set up in the reign of another king I refer to the Kalna inscription, stated to have been dated A H 895 (1489 A D) in his reign As the students of the history of medieval Bengal are aware, so far six inscriptions have been attributed to Firuz Shah one from Biral (District Dinajpur, Bangla Desh), stated to be dated A H 880 (1475 A D) by some and A H 887 and A H 889 (1484 A D) by others,⁴ another from Malda (District headquarters), dated A H 886 (1481-82 A D),⁵ third from Goamalti Gaur (District Malda), dated A H 894 (1489 A D) ⁶ fourth, from Kalna (District Burdwan), said to be dated A H 895 (1489 A D),⁷ fifth, from Garh Jharipa, Sherpur (District Mymensingh, Bangla Desh), dated A H 893 (1487 A D) ⁸ sixth, from Gaur, a

¹ *EIAPS* 1965 p 24 pl IX b

² *Ibid* p 26 pl IX a

³ The generally accepted duration of Saifu d Din Firuz's reign A H 892 895/1487 1490 A D (Sarkar *op cit* p 139 Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* p 128) has to be reassessed in the light of new epigraphical evidence comprising the epigraph under study dated A H 896 and the epigraph dated A H 893 of Jalalu d Din Fath Shah now in the British Museum London for which see *JASP* vol XIII (1968) No 1 p 49 Dr S Mahmudul Hasan (*ibid* pp 52 55) has discussed this question and arrived at the correct dates but has in the process, made some statements which require to be corrected for the sake of putting the record straight

⁴ Dr A H Dani *Bibliography of the Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal* (Dacca 1957) No 61 (Dr Dani has listed journals books etc where the inscriptions were previously published) Shamsud-Din Ahmad *op cit* pp 128 30, Dr Abdul Karim, A Fresh Study of the Biral inscription of Saif al Din Firuz Shah *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangla Desh* vol XVII (1972) ii pp 1 8

⁵ Dani *op cit* No 64 Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* pp 133 34 where the year is not given as in its earlier published text it was left unread This inscription which is now in the Indian Museum Calcutta, was re-edited by me in *EIAPS* 1955 and 1956 p 17 pl IVc where the year is tentatively read as A H 886 (1481-82 A.D)

⁶ Dani *op cit* No 62 Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* pp 131 32 Very few people know that the tablet bearing this inscription is in the private possession of the family of the late Shri Murlidhar Jalan of Patna Bihar State

⁷ Dani *op cit* No 63 Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* pp 132 33 This inscription which was also re edited by me in *EIAPS* 1955 and 1956 p 19, pl Vb is dated A H 897 (1491 92 A D) in the reign of Shamsu d Din Muzaffar Shah (1491-93 A D)

⁸ Dani, *op cit* No 65 and Shamsu d Din Ahmad *op cit* pp 134-137 where the year is left unread This epigraph was also re-edited by me in *EIAPS* 1955 and 1956 p 18 pl Va

fragmentary undated inscription ¹

Of these six, the Kalna epigraph has been shown by me elsewhere to belong not to Firūz Shah but to Shamsu'd Dīn Muẓaffar Shah (1491-93) ² However, since the Chunakhali record has now been finally proved to be of the former, the number of inscriptions standing to his credit remains the same

¹ Dani, *op cit* No 66 Maulavi Shamsu d Dīn Aḥmad has not taken note of this record It is difficult to say if this is the same inscription as described by S Mahmūd al Ḥasan in 'A Sultan Firūz Shāh II Fragment', *Asian Review (Art and Letters)*, New Series, vol 2, No 2 August 1965, pp 79-83, as this journal is not available to me for reference But I am inclined to feel that the two are identical This Fragment is now in the British Museum London Its reading was first published by Major William Francklin, *Journal of a Route from Raymahal to Gaur, A D 1810-11* (Bhagalpur c 1812), p 2

² *EIAPS* 1955 and 1956, p 19, pl V b

TWO NEW INSCRIPTIONS OF THE MUGHAL PERIOD FROM RANTHAMBHOR IN RAJASTHAN

BY S S HUSSAIN
Epigraphical Assistant

Ranthambhor,¹ one of the most impregnable fortress towns of India,² is situated on an isolated peak about 480 metres above sea level,³ in 26°2' N and 76°28' E, in the Sawai Madhopur district of Rajasthan. It lies at a distance of about 15 kilometres north east of Sawai Madhopur Railway Station on the Delhi Ratlam section of the Western Railway and is approachable upto the foot of the hill by a fine metalled road.

The name of the fort is derived from the combined name of two hills situated close to each other namely the Ran and the Thambhor. The fort proper with the palaces and other buildings therein, is built on the Thambhor hill.⁴ Most of these buildings except a few viz the big mosque, a tomb and a few mansions are in a dilapidated condition.

Due to its unique position, natural surroundings and massive fortification wall strengthened by towers and bastions, the fort had always posed a challenge to and been a matter of prestige for the invading monarch. Earlier occupied by the Jadon and Chauhan Rajputs, it never fully submitted to Delhi authority. It was seized by Iltutmish in 1226, again by Jalal-ud-Din Khalji in 1291 and finally by Alau-ud-Din in 1301. Only the latter's occupation was more lasting.

At the close of the 14th century or little thereafter, taking advantage of the tottering Delhi Sultanate in the wake of the invasion of Timur, it was annexed by the Malwa Sultan but it remained a bone of contention between the Khaljis of Malwa and the Maharajas of Mewar. It was finally wrested from the former by Rana Sangram, popularly known as Rana Sanga. However, after the defeat of the latter in 1528, it came under the authority of Mughal emperor Babur. But shortly, again, it passed into the hands of the Rajput chief of Bundi, Rai Surjan Singh Hada. It was from him that Babur's grandson Akbar finally captured it in March 1569. Since then it remained in the Mughal hands as the headquarters of a *Sarkar* in the *Suba* of Ajmer till the beginning of the downfall of the Mughal empire.⁵

Under the Mughals, particularly under Akbar and Jahangir, Ranthambhor seems to have enjoyed great importance. There is a record of Akbar's visit to the fort on the 24th April 1577 and his having reposed there in the palace of Rai Surjan.⁶ Jahangir had also camped here towards the close of 1618.⁷ Ranthambhor lay on the main route to the south

¹ For the history of the town, see Dr K C Jain, *Ancient Cities and Towns of Rajasthan* (Delhi, 1972), pp. 330-35.

² Mughal emperor Jahangir who visited the fort on Monday, 18th December 1618, gives a very interesting account of the fort, its buildings, its history and conquest by Akbar (Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Eng. tr. A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, vol. II, London, 1914, Reprint, Delhi, 1968, pp. 58-60). Also see *Imperial Gazetteer of India (IG)*, vol. XXI (Oxford, 1908), p. 235.

³ *IG loc cit*.

⁴ According to Jahangir (*op cit*, p. 59), it was on the Ran hill that Akbar at the time of the assault had ordered the planting of the cannon to aim at the buildings inside the fort.

⁵ For a more detailed and systematic account, see Jain, *op cit*.

⁶ Abu'l-Faiz, *Akbar Nama (AN)*, Eng. tr. H. Beveridge, vol. III (Calcutta, 1921, Reprint, Delhi, 1973), p. 285.

⁷ Jahangir, *op cit*, II, p. 58.

from north and is frequently mentioned as such in the accounts of foreign travellers, who describe it as one of the chief or important cities of the Mughal empire¹

The importance of Ranthambhor, during this period, depended on four things. First, it was important from the revenue point of view, it "became the first *Sarkār* or division in the province of Ajmer, and consisted of no less than eighty three *mahals* or fiefs, in which were included not only Kotah and Bundi and their dependencies, but most of the territory now constituting the State of Jaipur."² Incidentally, both Edward Terry and Jean De Thevenot who were in India in 1616-19 and 1666-67 respectively, describe it as the capital of the province (of Malway, or Malwa according to the latter), and the former calls it a city of great traffic.³ Secondly, from the military point of view, it was considered to be a stronghold of great strategic importance, from where the disturbances and advances from the western and central regions of India could be checked, controlled and curbed. In this respect, Ranthambhor fort had dual importance, being both the seat of a *Sarkār* and a military station as well.⁴ Thirdly, because of richness of copper mines in the neighbouring areas of Jaipur and Alwar,⁵ copper coins were struck here since the days of Akbar.⁶ And lastly, this fort, like other famous forts like Gwalior, was also used to detain the state prisoners who were condemned to death.⁷

In view of its long and important historical association during the Sultanate and Mughal periods, it is really surprising that the fort should have no epigraphical history. The fort does not seem to have been ever properly surveyed either for its monuments or inscriptions. When in March 1974, I was deputed to trace and copy available Arabic and Persian inscriptions there, I could only spot three epigraphs,⁸ two of which form the subject matter of this article. In my search, I did not come across any early or Pre-Mughal inscription, the two inscriptions studied below belong to the early 17th century, and the third, the writing of which has been obliterated, also seems to belong to the same period, if its calligraphy is any indication.

INSCRIPTION NO. 1, DATED A H 1006 (1598 A D)

The first of the two inscriptions is bilingual. The Persian version is engraved in relief on the eastern face of a dwarf pillar of marble standing on the right side near the foot steps of a ruined small mosque⁹ situated in the northern area of the fort. Below it is incised the *Nāgarī* record.¹⁰ Having been subjected to the inclemencies of weather for a long time, the writing of the Persian record is considerably damaged, particularly in its upper and lower portions. The *Nāgarī* writing is even much more damaged; its letters have almost completely peeled off.

¹ William Hawkins who was in India during 1608-13 describes it as one of the six special castles of the Mughal empire (William Foster, *Early Travels in India*, 1583-1619, London 1921, Reprint, Delhi, 1968, p. 100). Also De Laet *The empire of the great Mogol* Eng. tr. J. S. Hoyland, annotated by S. N. Banerjee (1928, Reprint Delhi, 1974), p. 36.

² *IG* vol XXI, p. 236.

³ Foster *op cit*, p. 293. S. N. Sen, *Indian Travels of Thevenot and Careri* (New Delhi, 1949), p. 98. Sen rightly points out (p. 318, fn. 14) that it was not the provincial capital. Thevenot may perhaps have meant the headquarters of a *Sarkar*.

⁴ Dr. Parmatma Saran, *The Provincial Government of the Mughals* (Allahabad 1941), p. 101, fn. 1.

⁵ *IG* vol XXI, pp. 128-29.

⁶ Abu'l Fadhli *Ā'in-i Akbarī* (AA) Eng. tr. H. Blochmann (Calcutta, 1871, Reprint, Delhi, 1965), pp. 32-33.

⁷ Sen *op cit*, p. 98. Finch (Foster, *op cit*, p. 145) and De Laet (*op cit*, p. 36) name it as one of the three noble-prisons or castles, the other two being Gwalior and Rohtas. See also Jahangir, *op cit*, II, p. 59.

⁸ *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE)*, 1973-74, Nos. D, 255-57. The information about these epigraphs was received from Shri W. H. Siddiqui, then Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological Survey of India, Western Circle, Baroda, which looks after the fort as a monument of national importance.

⁹ *ARIE*, 1973-74, No. D. 255.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, No. B. 136.

The Persian text is spread over sixteen lines of prose inscribed in fairly good *Nasta'liq* characters, while there are thirteen lines in local dialect in the *Nāgarī* version. The space occupied by the Persian writing measures 25 by 52 cm and the *Nāgarī*, 25 by 30 cm.

The Persian epigraph contains the text of an official order issued in 1598, on behalf of Nawwab Raja Jagannathji u the Rajadhiraj (i.e. Raja of the Rajas), by his officials—his Deputy (Na'ib) the great and respected Lord (*Khawāja*), Khawaja Bhogindra Singh the Divisional Officer (*Shiqdār*)¹ Rao Chondaji'ū and Miyan Burhan the Custodian of the fort (*Kotwāl*) of Ranthambhor, discontinuing the levy in the form of commodities and goods received till then for the Muslim and Hindu charitable funds or endowments—*Baitu l Māl*² and *Patal Bhog*³ of the text. It would appear that the levy under these heads was both in cash and kind, that in kind, to be exact, being in the form of grains, as the wording of the text *habūhāt* (line 10) specifically refers to the levy in kind as such. The order warns the officials (*Hākīm*) of both the communities Hindu and Muslim, under oath of irrevocable Divorce, to abide strictly by this injunction. The order was treated as an official document and it was ordered that it be set up by way of a notice to all. It was inscribed on the 28th of March of the said year (1598).

The text also records the name of the artisan, the stone cutter (*Sang Tarāsh*) Usta(d) Madhu (Madhav). The title Usta annexed to his name shows that he was highly rated.

Raja Jagannathji u of the epigraph is a well known person. He was the third son⁴ of Raja Bharamal of Āmber and held Ranthambhor in his *jāgir*⁵. Here on Akbar's return from his Deccan expedition about two years after the date of the record he had received the emperor. In the 4th regnal year of emperor Jahangir (1608), he received the rank of 5,000 with 3,000 horse⁶. His actual date of death is not mentioned, but it can be presumed that he had died a natural death some time during 1608-1611 as may be gathered from the statements of William Hawkins and William Finch who had travelled in India during this period.⁷

Another person of note mentioned in the record is Khawaja Bhoginder Singh, the Deputy of the Raja. The high sounding honorific used for him in the text—*Khawaja i-Mu'azzam wa Mukarram* i.e. the magnificent and the greatly respected Lord—denotes his exalted status, but surprisingly his identity cannot be established from available records. Very likely, he also was a member of the ruling Kachhwaha family of Āmber, some members of which were, as is well known, given the titles like Mirza by the Mughal emperors with whom they were related by marriage.

The text also furnishes the name of a high official namely Rao Chondaji u who held the

¹ *Shiqdār* broadly speaking means a governor, Divisional Revenue Collector etc. Under the Mughal emperors it was applied to the Chief Financial Officer of a division or to the viceroy in his financial capacity. For more information about the *Shiqdār* see M. A. Rahim, *History of the Shiqdār*, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* Karachi vol. XIII (1965) pp. 328-41.

² *Baitu l Māl* broadly speaking means the public treasury or exchequer into which payments on various accounts are made and from which the necessary expenses of the state are disbursed (H. H. Wilson, *A Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms* etc. (London 1855, Reprint Delhi 1968), p. 48, cols. 1-2 where more details are given).

³ This must mean food offered to gods. *Patal* literally means Lower region and *Bhog* enjoyment food, particularly food offered to gods.

⁴ R. N. Prasad, *Raja Man Singh of Amber* (Calcutta 1966) p. 13 quotes the genealogical Table preserved in the State Archives of Jaipur.

⁵ From Jam *op cit* p. 335 it would appear that Akbar assigned this fort to Jagannātha after its conquest but he does not quote any authority. According to Jam Jainism made some progress under him.

⁶ Abu'l Fadl *AN* vol. III p. 1189. Jahangir *op cit* vol. I p. 16. For details of his career under Akbar and Jahangir see Shah Nawaz Khan *Ma'athuru l Umarka*, vol. I (Calcutta 1888) pp. 514-16.

⁷ Foster *op cit* pp. 105-163.

post of the *Shiqdār* of the region We know one Rao Chonda¹ son of Rao Durga Sisodia of *parganā* Rampur (also called Islamabad) near Chitor, who had received in the early years of Jahangir's reign the rank of 700 and later on the title of Rai² Rao Chonda of our inscription is very likely identical with this personage

The other official mentioned in the record is Miyan Burhan, the *Kotwāl* or Custodian of the fort I have failed to trace him in historical works The use of the term *Dhishan* Bahadur with his name, if deciphered correctly, would indicate the high regard and esteem in which he was held The inscription has thus preserved the name of this local official of Akbar's time

The last person mentioned in the record is the stone cutter Usta Madhav This is also an interesting piece of information, particularly in view of the fact that the Persian records of India do not as a rule give the names of the artisans who executed or took part in construction-jobs

The text is badly damaged and its decipherment has not been easy The reading was finalised with the help of Dr Z A Desai, Director (Epigraphy) and Editor of this journal However, there is still some doubt about the reading in a couple of places, but fortunately this does not affect the purport

The text of the order reads as follows —

TEXT

Plate V (a)

- هو و (sic) ۱
 عرص ارس نوسه آدنگه راحه راحها ۲
 نواب راحه حگاب حو و ناب ۳
 حواحه معطم و مکرم حواحه هو گسدرسنگه ۴
 سقدار؟ راو حوندا حو و کونوال ۵
 حاب میان برهان دشان بها ۶
 درفلع ربهور حکم فرمودند که ماع ۷
 واساء یب المال و سال بهوگ معاف ۸
 کردند و عفو نمودیم که بعد ارس ۹
 حیوات مبلغ بریوجه نگرند و اگر ۱۰
 من بعد کسی حاکم مسلمان و هدو نگرند ۱۱
 اوراسه طلاق ناسی برن؟ بوده ناسد ۱۲
 و اس حد کلمه بر سسل سد نوسه ۱۳
 سد ناسدحال ۱۴
 بحررا فی الاریح ۱ سهر رمصان المارک ۱۵
 سگ تراش سه ۶ ۱ اسما مادهو ۱۶

¹ Shah Nawaz Khan *op cit* vol II (Calcutta 1890) p 143 has Chanda which seems to be a misprint for Chonda which is a common name among Rajputs Compare also his son's name Dada or Dūdā (*ibid*)

² *Ibid* Abu l Fadl AA p 460

³ This word could also be read as صوبدار (*Şubedār*)

TRANSLATION

- (1) He (is Allah) ¹
 - (2) The object of this writing is that the Raja of the Rajas,
 - (3) Nawwab Raja Jagannathji'ū and (his) Deputy (*Nāib*),
 - (4) the magnificent and greatly respected Lord (*Khwaja*) *Khwaja* Bhoginder Singh,
 - (5) (and) the Divisional Officer (*Shiqdār*)¹ Rao Chondaji'ū and the Custodian of the fort (*Kotwal*)
 - (6) Janab Miyan Burhan *Dhishan* (lit possessor of glory) Baha—
 - (7) dur, in the fort of Rantha [m] b [h] or,° ordered that in respect of (the levy of) such commodity
 - (8) and goods (as were till then received) in the *Baitu l Māl* and *Patāl-Bhog* (i.e. Public Funds of the Muslims and Hindus respectively), remission
 - (9) has been made and we have exempted it After this,
 - (10) no grains (nor) cash should be charged on this account And if
 - (11) after this, any Muslim or Hindu official (*Hākīm*) charges it,
 - (12) he will be deemed to have incurred three Irrevocable Divorce (*Talāq i-Bā'in*)³
 - (13) And these few written sentences, by way of document,
 - (14) are written (i.e. engraved on stone) so that in future
 - (15) Written on the date, the 1st of the month of auspicious Ramaḍan,
 - (16) (A H) 1006 (1 Ramadan 1006-28 March 1598) The stone-cutter (*Sang Tarāsh*)⁴
- (was) Usta (Ustad) Madhū (Madhav)

The impression of the *Nāgarī* version was sent to the Chief Epigraphist, Archaeological Survey of India, Mysore, for decipherment. But neither its text or translation nor its purport, was supplied by him. However, its contents are thus described in the *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy* which gives the name of 'Mahārājādhirāja Jamganāthaji' in the King's column "Mentions Vaurauji *kotavāla* and *sutradhāra Nātha* Purport not clear" The date of the record is stated in the said notice to be Vikrama 1855 Chaitra śu 1, and the date in the Hijra era was found illegible except the month name Ramaḍan⁴

In the above note, the Vikrama year appears to have been wrongly read as 1855 for 1655 which corresponds with the Hijra year which is quite clear in the Persian version and also, the local chief mentioned therein, namely Raja Jagannath, as has been shown above, belonged to the earlier date Chaitra śu 1, Vikrama 1655, which was 27/28 March 1598,⁵ exactly corresponds with the date of the Persian version

INSCRIPTION NO. 2, DATED A H 1022 (1613 A D)

The other record of this study is also engraved on a pillar which is fixed up near the Naulakha Gate of the fort⁶. Occupying a space of about 25 by 75 cm, the writing consists of fourteen lines of Persian prose inscribed in a bold hand in somewhat cursive *Nasta'liq* characters. It is also damaged but not so badly as the previous one, but the effect of exposure through centuries has rendered its decipherment somewhat trying. In particular, a word giving the name of the levy sought to be remitted cannot be satisfactorily read

¹ This word could also be read as *Sub(e)dar*

² The fort name is inscribed on the stone as "رسمور"

³ The curse of Divorce in respect of Hindu officials is interesting. This may be taken to indicate that *Talāq* was considered abominable both among the Muslims (for whom it was permissible under certain circumstances) as well as Hindus

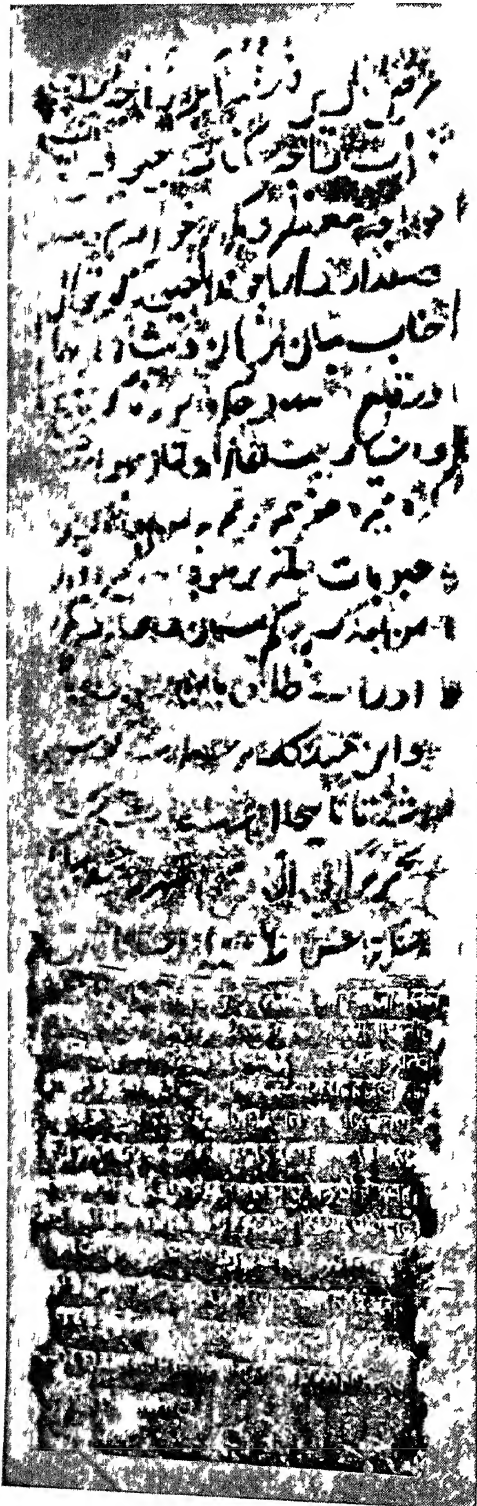
⁴ *ARIE*, 1973-74 No. B 136

⁵ S.K. Pillai, *Indian Ephemerides* vol V (Madras 1922) p. 398

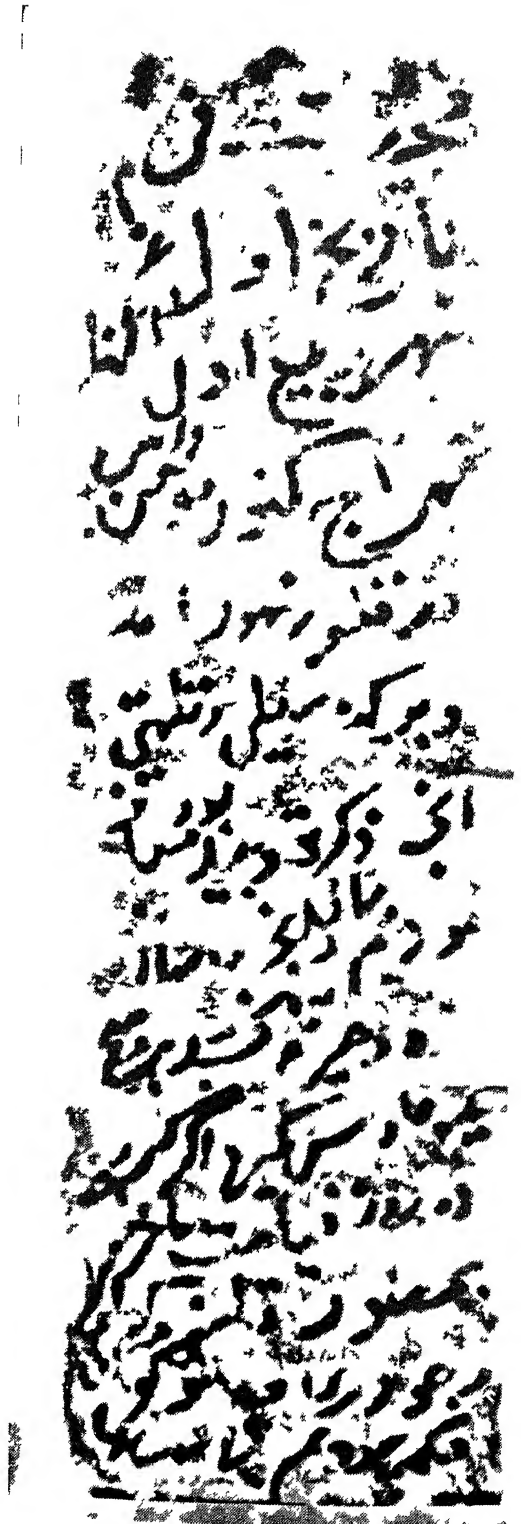
⁶ *ARIE* 1973-74 No. D 257

(a) Royal Order
dated A H 1006 (p 47)

(b) Another Royal
Order dated A H 1022 (p 49)



SCALE 25



SCALE 25

This epigraph also purports to be the text of an order which was, in this case, issued and set up after his visit to the fort of Ranthambhor by Maharajkunwar Mohan Das who ordered abolition of the *Zakāt* and remission of some other levy the name of which is not quite clear (it reads something like *Bila*) in the Haveli and Talehti *parganās*. The order prohibits the officials like *Qala dārs*, *Kotwāls*, *Chaudharis* and *Qānūngos* who are reported to have been present when the remission was announced from charging a single Paisa (*Fulūs*) from the public on this account. The order is dated the 1st of the month of Rabi' Awwal 1022 (11th April 1613).

The text of this order has been read as under —

TEXT

Plate V (b)

۱	محرر سب فی
۲	ناریج اول می
۳	سهر رنج الاول سه ۲۲ ۹۱
۴	مہراج کمور موہن داس
۵	در قلعه رنہپور آمد
۶	و برگہ حولی و بلہی
۷	آنچہ دکوہ (sic = رکوہ) وبلہ بود معاف
۸	نمودیم
۹	بحسبیدم وھج
۱۰	بیسہ ؟ فلوس نگرہ اگر گورد
۱۱	در روز فاسب ما خود سود ؟
۱۲	محصور قلعدار ؟ کوہوال
۱۳	و خودھری و فانوں گوبان
۱۴	حکم کردیم نا مراحت برسا [بند]

TRANSLATION

- (1) (It is) written on
- (2) the first day (lit. date) of
- (3) the month of Rabi' Awwal year (A H) 1022 (1 Rabi' I 1022=11 April 1613)
- (4) Maharajkunwar Mohan Das
- (5) visited the Rantha[m]b[h]or fort (and announced),
- (6-9) (And) we have decided to forego whatever *Dhakāt* (sic) and *Bila* (?), that were (levied in) the Haveli and Talehti *parganās* (and) have exempted

And not a

(10-11) single *Paisa Fulūs* should be charged (on this account) If anybody levies it, he will be incriminated on the day of Judgment

(12-14) We have ordained (this) in the presence of the *Qala dār*, *Kotwāl*, *Chaudharī* and *Qānūngos* so that they may not cause impediment (in the execution of this order of remission)

The inscription is quite important. Firstly, it may be recalled that we have so far come across three stone-edicts of Jahangir in which remission of Zakat is mentioned¹. This is the fourth record on this subject.

Secondly, it helps us to identify the fief (*jāgīr*) of the father of the dignitary mentioned in the record, Maharajkunwar Mohan Das. Both the father and the son are known from historical works but the whereabouts of their fief is not. Mohan Das was the son of Ray Rayan Patr Das² Khatri who had received from Jahangir on 24th October 1605, the title of Raja Bikramajit³. He held the post of Diwan under that emperor, as his father had held under Akbar. Mohan Das finds occasional mention in *Akbar Nāma* and *Tūzūk-i Jahangiri* (Jahangir's Memoirs)⁴. We are told, for example, that he was sent with 2 000,000 Rupees, for distribution among the auxiliaries of the army sent under the command of Ahmad Baig Khan to punish the Afghans of Bangash in Jahangir's second Regnal Year (May-June 1607 A.D.). In the next regnal year of the same emperor (November-December 1608 A.D.), Mohan Das was made Diwan of Gujarat under the newly appointed governor A'zam Khan and was promoted to the rank of 800 with 500 horse⁵. No further details of the career of Mohan Das are available. We are even ignorant of the *jāgīr* held by him or of the fact that he had inherited the fief of his father or received a new one. Unfortunately, we have no idea of the whereabouts of the fief of Mohan Das's father Raja Bikramajit either⁶.

It is a reasonable guess, in the light of the record under study, that Ranthambhor was included in the fief of Mohan Das's father Raja Bikramajit. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain Mohan Das's visit to Ranthambhor and his ordering the remission of the levies. Of course, it may be held that Mohan Das may have so acted in the capacity of some other dignitary's deputy, but this appears less probable. Again, according to Jahangir, the fort

¹ *Epigraphia Indica Arabic & Persian Supplement* 1964 pp 79-82 (from Kolaris and Shivpuri) *ibid* 1968, pp 65-66 (from Sironj).

² In most of the sources his name is so written, but Elliot and Dowson *History of India as told by its own Historians* vol VI (London 1875 Reprint Allahabad 1964) p 287 writes Hardās Rai. As a matter of fact the correct name is neither Patr Das nor Har Das but Tiper Das as has been pointed out by Principal S.H. Hoḍiwāla in his excellent commentary on Elliot and Dowson's volumes. In his remarks on Elliot's extracts from the *Tabaqat-i Akbari* in volume V and *Waqi'at-i Jahangiri* in vol VI Hoḍiwāla *Studies in Indo-Muslim History* (Bombay 1939) says P 546. Patr Das's name is written wrongly in the T.A. as well as the A.N. It was really Tiper Das which is a short form of Tripurāridas. Servant of Tripurārī (or Tripurahara), an epithet given to Mahadeva who is said to have destroyed the Asura Tripura. He is the Tipperdas of Ralph Fitch, 'England's Pioneer to India' who passed through Patna in 1586 and writes of him thus: 'He that is Chief here under the King (Akbar) is called Tipperdas and is of great account among the people' (Ryley Ralph Fitch p 110 Foster E.T.I. 24). The name is written correctly as سرداس with ب for the initial letter no less than four times in the Bibi Ind. Text of Budauni (II 281 II 3 5 & 8 and 282 I 3). It is true that Lowe calls him Patr Das (Tr II 289-290) and says Tapar is wrong but it is quite right. P 597 سرداس Bīr Das in the Text 9, last line but سرداس Tapar Das in the Iqbal Nama. He is called Patar Das by A.F. and Nizamu'd-Din but the correct form appears to have been Tapar Dās and he is so called by Ralph Fitch who saw him at Patna in 1586. 'He that is chief here under the King is', he writes 'Tipperdas and is of great account among the people' (E.T.I. 24 Ryley Ralph Fitch 110). He is mentioned as 'Tirpur Kshatri' repeatedly in the local chronicle of Bundelkhand, translated by Mr Silberrad in J.A.S.B. LXXI 1902, pp 112-14. The Sanskrit form is probably Tripurārī Das' Servant of Tripurārī (Enemy of Tripur) one of the epithets of Shiva or Mahadeva (Vishnu Purāṇ Tr Wilson Ed Hall, V Pt 1 118). —Editor

³ Jahangir *op cit* I, p 22. He also was then made Master of Ordnance and shortly afterwards made governor of Gujarat (*ibid*, p 50). For a brief account of his career see Abu'l-Faḍl AA pp 523-24.

⁴ Abu'l-Faḍl AN III, pp 478-645-721. Jahangir *op cit*, I pp 105, 153.

⁵ Jahangir *op cit*.

⁶ Jahangir (*op cit*, I p 284) states that he had permitted Rāja Bikramajit to return to his fief in the beginning of his 10th regnal year (March-April 1615) but he does not specify the name of the fief or the region in which it lay. For an account of his career based on the *Ma'athuru'l-Umara* see Abu'l-Faḍl AA pp 523-24.

of Ranthambhor was given to Raja Ram Das Kachhwaha in his 6th regnal year (September 1611 A D) The latter seems to have held the fief only for a short time as, shortly thereafter under royal displeasure caused by his (and other official s) poor performance in the Deccan expedition, he was sent to Bangash, where he died two years later ¹ It was about this time perhaps that Raja Bikramajit received Ranthambhor in his fief The epigraph under study provides the evidence of this in that it shows Mohan Das s association with the fort, a fact which has come to light through this epigraph only Also, the epigraph prefixes the title Maharajkunwar which must have been conferred upon him by the emperor, again a new piece of information He was obviously acting on behalf of his father when the remission was ordered by him

¹ Jahangir *op cit* pp 201, 252. Jahāngir s anger and annoyance is mentioned in Shāh Nawāz Khān, *op cit*, vol II, p 156

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE TOMB OF SADR-I-JAHAN AT PIHANI

BY DR. A. A. KĀDIRI
Senior Epigraphical Assistant

Some time before 1946, the late Maulavi M. Ashraf Husain M.A., then working in the office of the Superintendent, Archaeological Survey of India, Āgra had visited Pihani and prepared some notes on the Tomb of Sadr-i-Jahan in which he had described some inscriptions found there. A draft of these notes which mainly related to a brief description of the building and the identity of Sadr-i-Jahan and his son, the latter based on the account in the District Gazetteer and on that of H. Blochmann in his English translation of *Abu'l-Fadl's Ā'in-i-Akbari* and which was submitted by him in 1946 when Maulavi Shamsu'd-Din Ahmad was Superintendent for Muslim Epigraphy, was found in stray papers in the office of the Superintending Epigraphist for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions Nagpur. When I visited Pihani in 1966, I copied all the inscriptions found on the tomb complex. My visit yielded three more inscriptions.¹ At the suggestion of Dr. Z. A. Desai, the Editor of this journal I have prepared this article incorporating all the inscriptions from the said tomb. Needless to say I have also consulted the notes of the late Maulavi Ashraf Husain.

Pihani, formerly headquarters of the Pindarwa sub division in Tahsil Shahabad, is now included in the Hardoi Tahsil of the district of the same name about 25 kilometres to the north of the district headquarters. Well connected by road with places of note in and outside the district, it was once noted for excellent swords and turbans. The history of its foundation is doubtful according to some it was founded by Raja Lakhan Sen, the Gaur conqueror of the Thatera Fort at Simaugarh near Mansurnagar, whereas others assign its origin to Qādi Abdu'l-Ghāfur of Kannauj stated to have flourished in the reign of Mughal emperor Humayun in 1555.²

The chief historical and antiquarian interest of Pihani³ is its connection with Nawwab Sadr-i-Jahan the celebrated official of Akbar and his son Jahangir. The group of buildings known as the Tomb of Nawwab Sadr-i-Jahan described by Fuhrer as a building of much beauty, is situated in the Katra Bazar of the town, and although its compound walls have almost disappeared except on the south where a magnificent red sandstone gateway with a portion of the original boundary wall made of rubble bricks in lime mortar is still intact, its boundaries may be roughly defined as a tank on the north, a road on the west, the bazar on the south and the grand old Jamī Masjid on the east.

There are in all five inscriptions to be found here. One appears on the Porch which, quite important by itself, seems to have been overlooked by Maulavi Ashraf Husain, one on the central Tomb, two on the Tomb to its right and one on the Tomb to its left. In spite

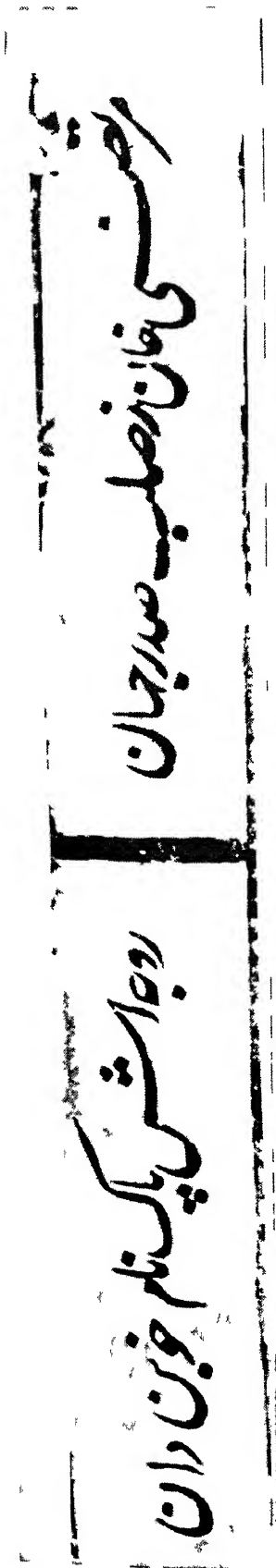
¹ *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE)* 1966-67 Nos. D 257-63.

² For details, see H. R. Neville *U.P. District Gazetteers: Hardoi District* (Allahabad 1904) p. 238. According to A. Fuhrer *The Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the N.W. Provinces and Oudh* (Allahabad 1891, Reprint Varanasi 1969) p. 281 it was founded in 1540 by Sayyid Abdu'l-Muqtadī, a younger brother of the Qādi.

³ Fuhrer *op cit*. A description of the town and its prominent buildings existing at the turn of the present century along with its history will be found in Neville *op cit* pp. 236-41 and Fuhrer *op cit*.

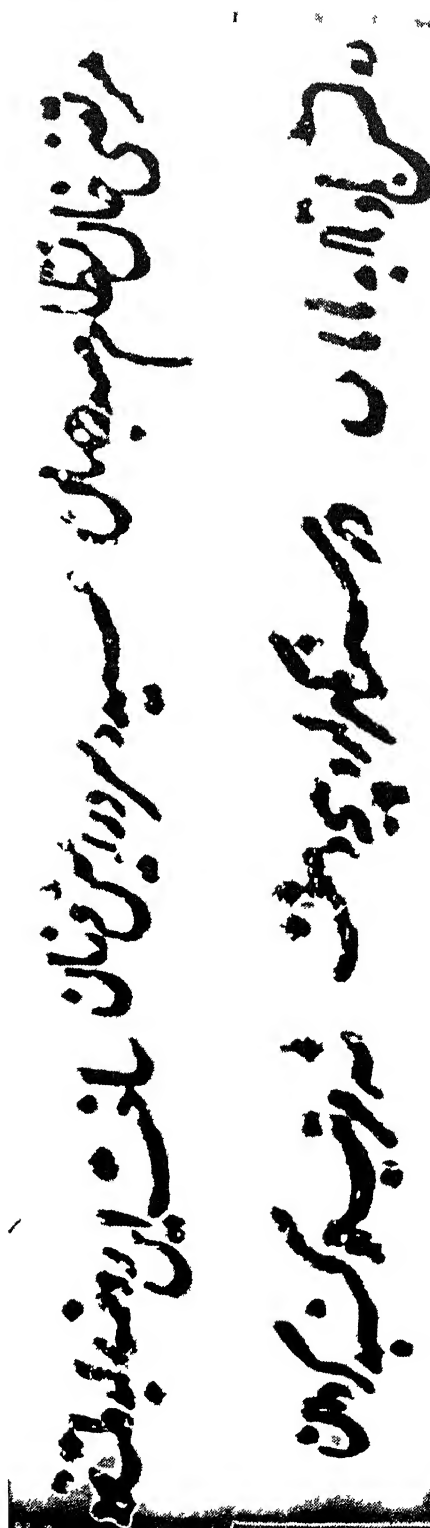
INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE TOMB OF ṢADR I JAḤĀN AT PIHĀNI

(a) Inscription mentioning Murtadā Khan and his wife (p 55)



SCALE 25

(b) Epigraph recording the construction of the Tomb in A H, 1057 (p 53)



SCALE 25

of the fact that the Sadr-i-Jahan family was pretty wellknown in the 17th century and had occupied high position in the reign of Mughal emperors Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan, its account as known in modern times through the District Gazetteer is rather hazy and even confused. The identification of the buildings also was not attempted in that account. Not only contemporary references and later accounts, which were ably pieced together into a cohesive account by Blochmann were overlooked, but no attempt was made to utilize the epigraphical evidence available on the spot. It is hoped that this study which is an attempt at critical presentation of all the available historical and epigraphical material in one place will give a clear picture of the history of, and the historical buildings connected with, this family.

INSCRIPTION NO I

The main block containing the tombs of Badr-i-Ālam, Sadr i-Jahan and his children is rectangular in plan, measuring about 23 by 6.5 metres. The Tomb popularly believed to be of Sadr i Jahan himself is a building of much beauty. A double dome,¹ poised on fourteen red sandstone pillars, four of which at the four corners are richly carved throughout, rises from a pavement of brick, cased with carved slabs of stone. The square plan of the building has been made octagonal by providing stone corbels at the four corners to support the dome. Internally, the dome is of *lakhauri* bricks in lime faced with stone slabs, whereas externally it is covered with lime plaster, architecturally, it is in the Mughal style, but the top having partly collapsed, no idea of its original finial can be conceived. Red sandstone is freely used in the construction of the Dargah and the brackets are of Hindu design like those seen in the monuments of Jahangir's period. The chief features of the building are its lightness, symmetry and rich but not florid ornamentation.² The grave situated in the centre of the Tomb is made of mud with a crude niche on the north to serve as a *Chiragh-dan* (Lamp stand).

Above the southern opening of the building, on the inner face beneath the dome,³ is the following Persian epigraph in verse inscribed in relief in one line. The style of writing which is affected by wear and tear is beautiful *Nasta'liq*. The quality of the metrical text, which occupies a total writing space of 155 by 17 cm, is fairly good. It reads as follows —

TEXT

Plate VI (b)

سید و سرور رمیں و رمان	مریضی حان نظام صدر حمان
دولتیں ناد نا اند پانان	ساحت اس روضہ را ندولت حود
سد مرید چو گند گردان	درسه نکہراز و سجدہ و ہف

TRANSLATION

Murtada Khan Nizām-i-^(1 e son of⁴) Sadr-i-Jahan, the lord and chief of space and time,

built this mausoleum during his government. May his government last till eternity!

In the year (A H) one thousand and fifty and seven (A H 1057=1647-48 A D), this building resembling the revolving vault (of Heaven), was completed

¹ Neville *op cit*, p 237. Führer *op cit* J C Price Powell has devoted an independent article on the Tomb (J C Price Powell. The tomb of Nawwab Sadr Jahan at Pihani. *Journal of the United Provinces Historical Society* vol IX 1936 part II pp 1-5).

² Powell *op cit* p 1. Neville, *op cit* Führer *op cit*

³ *ARIE* 1966 67, No D 259

⁴ Here there is *idafat i ibni*

There is little doubt that the builder of the Tomb mentioned here is not the Sadr-i-Jahan himself, but his son Sayyid Nizām entitled Murtada Khan. The father, Miran Sadr-i-Jahan was an eminent person of his time and enjoyed high position in Akbar's court. He was born in Pihani and became a *Mufti* (Giver of Religious Decrees) in the royal court through the influence of Shāikh Abdu'n-Nabī. He along with Hakim Humam went to the Uzbek king as Akbar's ambassador. On his return in the 34th regnal year (1589 A.D.), he was made Sadr (Ecclesiastical law officer). By the 40th regnal year (1595 A.D.), he had received a rank of 700, but it was raised to 2,000, later on, when he joined the Dīn-i-Ilāhī in Muharram 1004 (August-September 1595). Jahangir, who was very fond of him and certifies him as 'one of the genuine Sayyids of India', raised his rank just a month after his accession on 20th Jumada II 1014 (24th October 1605) from 3,000 to 4,000 and barely an year and a half later, to, 5,000.¹ He finds frequent mention in the emperor's Memoirs. Jahangir makes particular mention of his having known him from childhood, and the Sadr's single-minded loyalty towards him since those early days to his accession to the throne. The last mention of him made by Jahangir is in connection with Miran Sadr-i-Jahan's having come from his native place and waited on Jahangir at Ajmer with an offering of 100 *muhrs* on or about 2nd Jumada I 1024 (20th May 1615).² This statement of Jahangir seems to have escaped the notice of subsequent historians who⁴ place Miran Sadr-i-Jahan's death in A.H. 1020 (i.e. four years earlier). H. Blochmann,⁵ who has based his account of Miran Sadr-i-Jahan's career on contemporary 'Abdu'l Qadir Budayūni, and later Shah Nawaz Khan, have made this mistake. If Jahangir's statement is correct—and there is no need to doubt it—Sadr-i-Jahan must have lived to an age of 124 years since he is stated to have been 120 years old in A.H. 1020.⁶

According to Shah Nawaz Khan, Miran Sadr-i-Jahan had two sons. Badr-i-'Ālam who led a retired life and Sayyid Nizām entitled Murtada Khan whose mother was a Brahmin woman.⁷ The latter was early introduced at the court and on his father's death, was granted 2,500 rank, 2,000 horse. In the first year of Shah Jahan's reign (1628 A.D.), he was promoted to a command of 3,000, 2,000 horse, and on the death of the Thatta governor Mir Husamu'd Dīn Injū Murtada Khan, the title of Murtada Khān was conferred upon him. After active service, towards the close of which he was posted at Dalmau, Biswara and Lucknow, he retired from service in the 24th year of Shah Jahan's reign (1651-52 A.D.) and received an annual grant of 20 lacs of *dāms* out of the revenue of Pihani. The date of his death is not known, but he is stated to have lived long to enjoy his pension.⁸

According to Mr. H.R. Neville, the tomb belongs to Miran Sadr-i-Jahan himself and was built by him,⁹ but local tradition was that his son, Sayyid Nizām Murtada Khan Sadr-i-Jahan built the tomb of his brother, Badr-i-'Ālam, and was himself buried there along with his wife, named Bibi Khūban, and children.¹⁰ The inscription under study supplies a decisive

¹ Jahangir *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* Eng. tr. A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, vol. I (London 1909, Reprint, Delhi, 1968) pp. 22, 140.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 46, 140, 293.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁴ Shah Nawaz Khan *Ma'athuru'l-Umara*, vol. III (Calcutta 1891), p. 350.

⁵ Abu'l-Faḍl, *Ā'in-i-Akbari* English tr. H. Blochmann (Calcutta, 1871, Reprint Delhi, 1965), p. 522.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ The District Gazetteer (Neville *op cit.* p. 238) calls her Parbatī. Also 'Abdu'l Hamīd Lahorī, *Badshah Nama* (Calcutta, 1867) vol. II p. 176.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 361. Shah Nawaz Khan, *op cit.* pp. 479-81. Blochmann, *op cit.* p. 523.

⁹ Neville, *op cit.* p. 237.

¹⁰ The late Maulavi Ashraf Husain in his notes has put forward one more argument in support of the local tradition. According to this the orientation of the grave assigned to Sadr-i-Jahan is strictly Islamic pointing north and south, unlike that of the graves of the followers of the Dīn-i-Ilāhī pointing east and west (*Dabistan-i-Madhahib* (Kanpur, A.H. 1321) p. 328. Budayūni, *Muntakhabu't-Tawarikh*, vol. II (Calcutta 1865) pp. 340-41).

information at least in respect of the builder. Apart from the fact that there is no historical evidence in support of Mr Neville's view in this regard, the text clearly states that the tomb was constructed by Sayyid Nizām himself. It is, however, not possible to say, if the father Miran Sadr-i-Jahan was buried here or not, though it is not at all unlikely that the father is buried in the tomb-complex at his native place, particularly in view of Jahangir's statement quoted above, that sometime after retirement, he had come to wait upon him at Ajmer *from his native place*. This clearly shows that Miran Sadr-i-Jahan had retired to his native place where he must have passed away in due course. There are reasons to believe that Miran Sadr-i-Jahan himself does lie buried in the central Tomb, locally believed to be of his elder son Badr-i-'Ālam, if the fragmentary inscription thereon has been correctly described (Inscription No III). Had this epigraph come down to us in full and in undamaged condition, the question of the identification of the Tomb of Miran Sadr-i-Jahan would have been decided once for all.

It is also likely that the immediate event that might have prompted the building of the Tomb-complex—provided the present inscription refers to it—may have been to provide for the mausoleum for Nizām Murtadā Khan's own wife whose name was Bibi Khūban. This can be surmised without much fear of contradiction, from the next epigraph.

INSCRIPTION NO II

Fixed on the south side of the Porch of the Tomb,¹ this is also a one-line epigraph but its text consists of only a single couplet composed in the same rhyme and metre as the previous epigraph and executed in the same style of writing, i.e. *Nasta'liq*. It simply states that Murtadā Khan (i.e. Nizām) was born of Sadr-i-Jahan and that his wife's name was Khūban. There is no date but in view of the same rhyme and metre in which it is composed, it was in all probability intended as a part of the previous epigraph. Therefore, it is reasonable to hold that this record was also carved in or immediately after A.H. 1057 (1647-48 A.D.), when the Tomb proper was completed. Also, if we were to hazard a reasonable guess that Bibi Khūban had expired in or just before that year, it would not be very much off the mark.

It is also clear that the local tradition cited above must have had its basis on these inscriptions. The information must have been available to those who could read the inscriptions and the same passed from generation to generation and came to be quoted in recent times in preference to the original source with which few people were now familiar. Locally, a dilapidated tomb situated immediately to the south of Sadr-i-Jahan's Tomb is assigned to Bibi Khūban.

The reading of this epigraph occupying a space of 95 by 15 cm. on stone is given below —

TEXT

Plate VI (a)

مریمی خان ر صلب صدر جهان روحه اش پاک نام حوبن دان

TRANSLATION

Murtadā Khan is from the groins of Sadr-i-Jahan. Know his righteous wife (to bear) the name Khūban.

INSCRIPTION NO III

The Tombs on the west and east of the Tomb of Sadr-i-Jahan are said to contain the remains of Badr-i-'Ālam and Nizām Murtadā Khan's children respectively. The tomb of the

¹ *ARIE*, 1966 67 No. D 257

former is held in veneration by the local people and once a year in the month of Jeth on Sunday, a fair is held in the tomb enclosure when offerings in the form of *chaddais* (cotton sheets) etc are made. It is similar in plan and in most details to the Tomb of Sadr-i Jahan, but its dome has entirely disappeared. The openings between the stone columns were originally filled with perforated stone screens, fragments of which are still traceable here and there. Over the opening on the south is fixed a fragmentary slab measuring 28 by 32 cm,¹ which contains the two line epigraph in Persian verse inscribed in *Nasta liq* letters in relief.

This appears to be an important record but unfortunately, it is fragmentary, and most of its text is lost. Moreover, the surviving words are also damaged.

The extant text has been deciphered as under —

TEXT

Plate VII (a)

۱ سال وفات حسـ[م]
۲ هم میر و نوده صدر جهان ؟

TRANSLATION

- (1) I sought the year of (his) demise
- (2) He was a noble chief (Mir) (as well as) the Sadr-i Jahan (?)

In view of the damaged nature of the writing, the reading of the words *Sadr i-Jahan*³ in the second line is not intended to be final. But if it is proved to be correct, it would mean that the Tomb belongs to Sadr i Jahan himself, i.e. the father. It is a pity that the epigraph has not come down to us in its entirety or well-preserved condition. Otherwise, the identification of the Tomb would have been final.

INSCRIPTION NO IV

The tomb on the left, ascribed to Sadr-i-Jahan's children, is again similar in plan to his own tomb noticed above but, unlike the latter, it has a flat roof of stone slabs carried on twelve stone pillars. There are two massive stone beams placed north-south on the stone brackets resting on intermediate columns. Inside, there are three mud graves, the middle one, according to local tradition, containing the remains of Sadr-i Jahan's favourite daughter and the remaining two, of his two sons. Above the central opening on the south, inside the tomb, is a red sandstone slab bearing a Persian couplet executed in two lines in beautiful *Nasta liq* letters in relief.⁴ The slab measures 50 by 34 cm and the text which is slightly damaged reads as under —

TEXT

Plate VII (b)

۱ روضه عصمت ناهی حب الماوا مهتـ
۲ سد نامی آن سال بکهارار و سب و سب

¹ *AIRE* 1966 67 No D 258

² In Maulavi Ashraf Husam's notes this portion is left unread.

³ Murtaga Khan does not appear to have held this title (as has been taken throughout in the notes of Maulavi Ashraf Husam). Even Shah Nawaz Khan and Blochmann do not take it to be the son's title as well Jahangir (*op cit*, vol II London 1914 Delhi Reprint 1968 p 107) while referring to his having waited on him when he was *Faujdar* of Kannauj in his 14th regnal year (June 1618 to May 1619 A.D.) calls him Sayyid Nizam son of Miran Sadr i Jahan.

⁴ *ARIE*, 1966-67, No D 261

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE TOMB OF ŞADR I JAHÂN — Contd

(a) Epitaph of Sadr-i Jahan himself (?) (p 56)

سال وفات حیات
 بم یوم و در سال

SCALF 33

(b) Epigraph recording the construction of a Lady's Tomb (p 56)

روز مهتابی حیات او بهشت
 شد تمامی آن بال یکزار و شصت و هشت

SCALE 27

TRANSLATION

(1) (This is) the tomb of the asylum of chastity (which is like unto) the highest Paradise the Jannatu'l Mawa

(2) Its completion took place in the year (A H) one thousand and sixty and eight (A H 1068=1657-58 A D)

From the text, it is clear that the Tomb was erected over the remains of a lady But whether she was the favourite daughter of Sadr i Jahan as is locally believed,¹ it is difficult to say for certain

Note

When the proofs of this Number were being seen, I happened to see at Banāras, through the courtesy of Dr Wyne Begley of the Iowa University, United States, Dr M A Chaghtai's *Pāk-wa Hind ki Islāmī Khattātī* (in Urdū) published in 1976 at Lahore In this book, Dr Chaghtai has quoted (p 52) the text of an inscription, according to which, the large mosque situated in the Lohārī Mandī Chowk on which it appears, was built by 'Sayyid Sadr i Jahān, the generous, the refuge of the world' in the year (given in a chronogram) A H 1015 (1606 07 A D) According to Dr Chaghtai, he is identical with Mirān Sadr i Jahān 'the Grand Muftī of Akbar's time, who had come to Lāhore towards the close of that emperor's reign and was well received by Jahāngir Dr Chaghtai refers to 'some local traditions which speak of Mirān Sadr i Jahān having died at Lāhore where his tomb lies somewhere on the Nawān Kot Multan Road' This last statement does not appear to be correct Shaikh Farīd Bhakkari *Dhakhiratu l-Khawānīn*, vol II (Karachi, 1970), pp 221 23, 242-43, which I chanced to see only now, also gives some new information about both the father and the son

—Editor

¹ The local belief of its being the tomb of a lady must have been initiated when the contents of the record were known though they later on passed on into local tradition

TWO NEW QUTB SHAHI INSCRIPTIONS FROM GOLCONDA

BY DR Z A DESAI AND S S HUSSAIN

Though a considerable number of inscriptions of the Qutb Shahi rulers as compared to those of the other post Bahmani kingdoms of the Deccan have been brought to light and published in the previous issues of this series and elsewhere¹ the fact remains that no systematic survey of these inscriptions was ever attempted² and even now from time to time, new records of this dynasty are discovered in places like Hyderabad and Golconda itself. During the official tour in February, 1976, Shri S S Hussain Epigraphical Assistant in the office of the Superintending Epigraphist for Arabic and Persian Inscriptions Nagpur found two new such inscriptions which form the subject matter of this article.

Of these two epigraphs one belongs to the reign of Ibrahim Qutb Shah (1550-80), while the other is a very important record in that it pertains to the time of Abul Hasan Qutb Shah the last ruler of the dynasty.

INSCRIPTION NO 1

The tablet bearing the first inscription was buried under the boundary wall of the step well called Imlwali Baori situated at the edge of the Nagina Bagh in the Golconda Fort³. The credit of discovering this important inscription goes to an employee of the Archaeological Survey of India, Shri Babayya, the Monument Attendant posted at the Fort. It was he who spotted about five centimetres of the inscribed tablet jutting out of the ground. Then with the help of the Conservation Assistant and his staff of the South Eastern Circle of the Archaeological Survey of India at Golconda, the entire tablet was removed from under the wall, enabling Shri Hussain to have its ink rubbings prepared. We are thankful to all of them for their cooperation. The tablet has since been removed and is now lying in the office of the Conservation Assistant Golconda Fort.

Unfortunately, on examination, this epigraphical tablet proved to be half its original size also the original tablet appears to have been semi circular in shape. A search was made for the missing half but it could not be traced. Apparently it was used as masonry at some

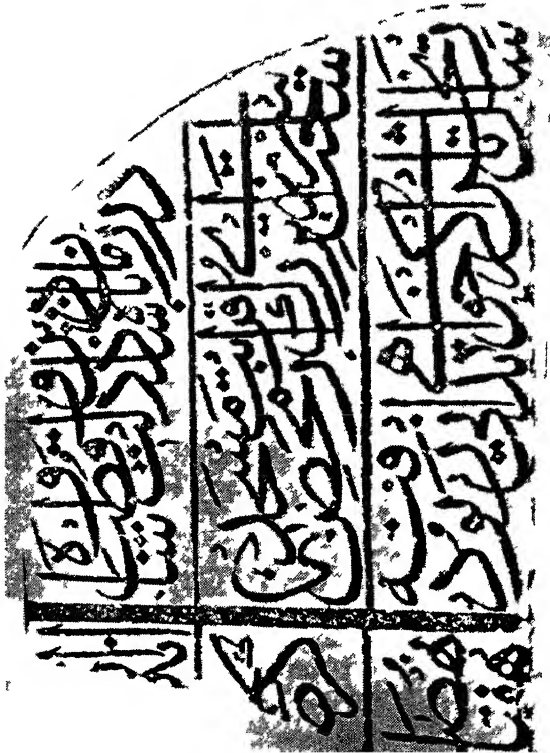
¹ *Epigraphia Indo Moslemica (EIM)* 1907-08 pp 23-28 *ibid* 1913-14 pp 48-55 57 pls XVIII a & b XIX a & b XX a *ibid* 1915-16 pp 19-40 pls V a & b VI a & b IX b X a & b XIII a & b *ibid* 1917-18 pp 48-55 pls XVIII c XIX a & b XX a & b XXI XXII XXIII a & b *ibid* 1925-26 pp 23-26 pls XI a XII *ibid* 1935-36 pp 22-25 61-62 pls XIII XV a XXXIX and *ibid* 1937-38 pp 49-51 52 pls XVII a XVIII a & b *Epigraphia Indica Arabic and Persian Supplement (FIAPS)* 1953 and 1954 pp 23-33 pls VII b IX a & b Xb *ibid* 1959 and 1960 p 57 pl XV *ibid* 1966 pp 27-34 pls VI a & b VII a b & c VIII a & b IX S A A Bilgrami *Landmarks of the Deccan* (Hyderabad 1927) *en passant* and Bashiru d Din Ahmad *Waqi at Mamlakat i Bayapur* vol III (Agra 1915) pp 539-71.

² This is all the more surprising as Hyderabad had one of the most efficient Archaeological departments of the pre-Independence Indian states whose able Director since its very inception in 1915 the late Dr Ghulam Yazdani worked as the Honorary Muslim Epigraphist to the Government of India and edited in that capacity for the Archaeological Survey of India its epigraphical journal in this series (*EIM* 1913-14 to 1939-40). Incidentally this accounts for the preponderance of the Qutb Shahi records among the published Arabic and Persian inscriptions of the Deccan referred to above.

³ *Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARIE)* 1975-76 No D 1

QUTB SHÂHI INSCRIPTIONS FROM GOLCONDA

(a) Inscription dated A H 97X originally from a Mosque (p 59)



SCALE 14

(b) Epigraph *cum* Mosque Record, dated A H 1089 (p 61)



SCALE 6

other place in the fort-wall or elsewhere or might have even fallen in the above mentioned step well

The extant text occupies a space of about 76 by 50 cm and purports to record the construction of a mosque by one who is merely referred to as Mirza 1 Buzurg during the reign of the king of the Religion and the State Qutb Shah (by whom, in view of the date evidently Ibrahim Qutb Shah is meant) in the year A H 970 and odd. The exact year cannot be determined as the word indicating the unit of the year was inscribed on the portion of the slab that is now missing but fortunately the words Nine hundred (and) seventy occur on the surviving tablet which would place the construction between A H 970 (1562 63 A D) and A H 979 (1571 72 A D), when Ibrahim was reigning. It is not certain if Mirza 1 Buzurg is used as the proper name of the builder or just as an honorific—meaning the great Mirza—to express his dignity and high ranking personality. Now if it was used in the latter sense that is to say to qualify the builder as the great Mirza, the name of the Mirza should have occurred in the text on the missing other half of the tablet. But from the syntax of the second verse its missing second hemistich does not seem to contain the name (of the Mirza) but appears to have been devoted to say something about the mosque. In the circumstances, it is futile to speculate about or try to identify the builder.

The text which is in Persian verse, originally seems to have consisted of a Fragment of three verses of which only the first half of each verse—the first hemistich and a word or so of the second hemistich of each verse, to be exact—has survived. The missing portion, fortunately does not amount to much as far as the purport is concerned, except of course the part of the date.

The quality of verse is fairly good. The style of writing is also fairly good *Naskh*.

The text has been deciphered as under —

TEXT

Plate VIII (a)

در زمان ناساھ دس و دول قطب ساه
آنكه ار
۲ صاحب سرايے بزرگ ارمحص قرب مسجدی
کراصل[ما]
۳ سال ناريجش اگر حوھے ندانی رفه بود
هصد (و) هصاد

TRANSLATION

- (1) In the time of the king of the Religion and the State, Qutb Shah, who
- (2) Mirza 1 Buzurg (lit the Great Mirza) built, just for the sake of obtaining proximity (to God), a mosque which

- (3) If you desire its date of construction know (that by now) had passed Nine Hundred and Seventy through purity (from the Migration of the Prophet)

As stated above the mosque was constructed some time in or after A H 970 (1562 63 A D) but before A H 980 (1572 73 A D) i.e. between A H 970 and A H 979 (1562 and 1572 A D).

Unlike in the case of the builder, the exact location of the mosque referred to in the text may perhaps be determined with some amount of certainty. The possibility that it was situated

in the fort itself, somewhere in the vicinity of the Nagina Bagh and the afore-mentioned step well (where the slab was presumably used for masonry work in the past by illiterate labourers for constructing the boundary wall of the step-well) is reasonably strong. According to Shri Hussain, there is at the edge of the said step well, abutting to its north eastern side on the western periphery of the Nagina Bagh a large raised plinth (forming a court) with steps and a portion of the western wall with three arches and prayer niches (*mihriābs*), of which, half or slightly more than half has fallen in the step well. This, in all probability, was the mosque referred to in the epigraph.

The inscription thus would add one more mosque to three mosques generally associated with Ibrahim Qutb Shah's reign, this one being the second, if the above presumption is correct, in the Golconda Fort premises itself. The other mosques are A small pretty mosque with two graceful minars half way up the Bala Hisar in the Golconda Fort and Mustafa Khan's mosque and Mulla Khatayali's mosque, within the annexe to the Golconda Fort called Naya Qal'a or 'New Fort'.¹

This inscription incidentally raises a very important question. The ascription of the first (Bala-Hisar) mosque situated half way up the Bala Hisar has been recently doubted if not challenged by Dr Z A Desai, Director (Epigraphy), Archaeological Survey of India, Nagpur, on stylistic grounds, he is inclined to consider it as a later building, probably of Abdu'llah Qutb Shah's time.² Against this, it has been, however, suggested that if this view were to be accepted, the question would arise whether, Golconda being the permanent residence of Ibrahim there were no mosque on the way to Bala Hisar which answered to the religious needs of the king and his courtiers. The answer to this poser is perhaps provided by the inscription under study and the ruins of the mosque which is being identified as its original place. Situated as it is at the start of the Bala Hisar steps adjoining the step-well in a corner of Nagina-Bagh this now desolate and ruined mosque with facilities of water, garden, etc., was best suited to serve the purpose of a prayer house for the courtiers, officials, soldiers, visitors and the like.

INSCRIPTION NO 2

The other inscription of this study is again a new record of the last Qutb Shahi ruler Abu'l Hasan. The inscription occurs in the central prayer-niche (*mihriāb*) of the mosque called Saraiwali Masjid in Shaikhpet, a village situated at a distance of about four kilometres to the north east of the Golconda Fort. The mosque, which is in very good shape, lies on the western outskirts of the village along with two other monuments of sufficient historical and architectural interest, viz., a Tomb and a Caravansarai.

The text of the epigraph, furnishes an extremely interesting record in more than one aspect. Firstly it is one of the very few extant records so far known of Abu'l Hasan Qutb Shah,³ like the Gosha Mahal record,⁴ it does not mention him by name, but it refers to the reign of a king at a date given in figure as well as words, which falls in his reign. Secondly, it seems to

¹ For details see H K Sherwani *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty* (New Delhi 1974) pp 204-06.

² H K Sherwani and P M Joshi ed *History of Medieval Deccan 1295-1724* vol II (Hyderabad 1974), p 297.

³ *Ibid* p 297 fn.

⁴ *ARIE* 1975-76 No D, 50.

⁵ So far six records of Abu'l Hasan are known. Of these four were published in *EIM*, 1917-18 pp 51 (pl XX b) 52-53 (pls XXIII a XXI) 55 (pl XXII). These were also noticed with suggested improvements in Bilgrami *op cit* pp 78-81-85 (all with illustrations). The remaining two were published in Bilgrami *op cit* pp 69 (inscription from Gosha Mahal Hyderabad untraceable text reproduced from Girdhari Lal Ahqar's *Tarikh-i Zafra*) 75-76 (without plate).

⁶ Bilgrami, *op cit* p 69.

contain an epitaph-*cum* mosque record, and thirdly, it records the name of the calligrapher who inscribed it

The text is in Persian verse and Arabic prose cut in relief in horizontal panels numbering seven, which are fixed in the sides of the said *n ihrāb* above the inner arch apex level. The first two panels contain a hemistich each in Persian making one couplet. The next three panels have religious text in Arabic, the middle of which quotes the famous Quranic verse (*Qur ān*, Chapter LXXII verse 18) occurring in mosque inscriptions and the remaining two reproduce the famous Tradition of the Prophet exhorting his followers to hasten to offer prayers before their prescribed time is over and to do repentance before they are overtaken by death. The last two i.e. the sixth and the seventh panels, again, contain another Persian couplet in the same metre and rhyme as the one in the first two panels appearing to make between them a Fragment, the seventh panel, in addition, containing the name of the scribe and the date both in words and figures. The couplet contained in the first two panels states that 'our cypress has received a call from the Unseen (so) that it treads instantly or all of a sudden, the path of God', while that in the last two states that 'a mosque was built in the name of God in the time of an auspicious-faced monarch'.

This first couplet may be taken to refer to the death of some young or beautiful person—the call of the Unseen and its 'sudden' response by the 'cypress' can be reasonably so interpreted. On the other hand, it can also be taken to mean that the cypress received inspiration to follow all of a sudden the path of God, that is to say, to build a mosque. The second couplet of the inscription (if it is intended to form part of the same Fragment as is indicated by the same metre and rhyme in which it is composed), mentioning the construction of the mosque would at first sight lend weight to this view. However, the wording of the first couplet—'Call of the Unseen to our cypress' and his (or her) instant or sudden response to it would favour the first interpretation.

In any case, there is no doubt about the mosque having been built in or before A H 1089 (1678-79 A D) in the time of the reigning monarch Abu l-Hasan.

The last panel, in addition, contains the date, given in figure as well as words in Persian, which is evidently of writing and presumably also of the construction of the mosque. It also contains the name of the calligrapher, namely Hasan Ali, by this, very probably Hasan (son of) 'Ali is meant¹. The style of writing is a fairly good specimen of *Naskh* writing.

The epigraph occupies a total writing space of 3.85 metres by 23 cm and the text has been read as under —

TFXT

Plate VIII (b)

رعب آمد است سرومارا ندا که ناگه نه بود براه خدا

عجلو [۱] بالصلوة قبل العوب

وان المساحد لله فلا تدعوا مع الله احدا

عجلو [۱] بالوبة قبل الموب

وبعهد حها ندار فرح لفا و بنا کرد مسجد نام خدا

کسه حسن علی الف هشتاد نه سه ۸۹ ۱

TRANSLATION

From the Unseen, a voice beckoned my cypress, so that he (or she) suddenly (or instantly) took to the path of God

¹ It could also be read as Ali (son of) Hasan this aspect will be discussed later on

'Hasten to (say your) prayers lest ye miss them (lit before their expiry time)'

And verily, the mosques are for Allah only, hence, invoke not anyone else with Allah' ¹

'And hasten to (do) repentance before death overtakes you'

In the reign of the world master of auspicious countenance,

and² (he) built a mosque in the name of God Written by Hasan (son of ?) 'Alī ³ Year A H 1089, one thousand (and) eighty (and) nine (A H 1089=1678-79 A D)

The text no doubt does not mention the name of the ruling king but refers to his reign as stated above This may be an inadvertent omission Even in the Gosha-Mahal inscription, his name is absent, as pointed out above But there is little doubt that the king referred to is none but Abu l Hasan Qutb Shah popularly known as Tana Shah who succeeded his father-in-law 'Abdu'llah Qutb Shah in A H 1083 (1672 A D) and ruled until his deposition and arrest by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb fifteen years later

Likewise, the text is not at all clear as to the name, leave alone, the identity of the builder of the mosque As it is, the Persian metrical text gives two-fold information mentioning the death of an unidentified person and the construction of the mosque, it is also not possible to determine from its wording if the deceased and the builder of the mosque are one and the same person, though it would appear that these are two separate persons In any case, the absence of any names in this particular poetical text is disappointing if not intriguing

Also, it is not clear as to who composed the poetical fragment The lack of this information of course would not have mattered much—authors of a large number of metrical inscriptions are unknown—but for the fact that the author of this record calls the deceased 'our cypress' which may either be taken to mean his beloved one—a wife, a son or a daughter, a young relative of either sex and the like and hence the information about him would have helped in establishing the identity of the deceased as well

Fortunately, the text gives at least the name of the calligrapher, which has been taken by us to be Hasan (son of) 'Alī It will be seen that the two-word name has been split up, the parts having been written above and below the Arabic phrase *Katabahu* meaning 'Written by' This could be taken as Alī Hasan—a single name, Alī (son of) Hasan, Hasan 'Alī—a single name, or Hasan (son of) 'Alī, as there is no indication in the text as inscribed in this portion for correct determination of the name While 'Alī Hasan seems to be out of question, Hasan 'Alī or Hasan (son of) 'Alī seems to be intended In any case, the person named is not traceable and cannot be identified He appears to have been a professional penman, the only extant specimen of whose calligraphy is preserved in this epigraph The calligraphy is not of such a higher order as to suggest his association with the royal court or the royal library at Golconda, where a number of calligraphers are known to have been employed ⁴ He appears to have been one of the artists in different fields who along with men of letters had made the Qutb Shahi capital a cultural seat In short, the epigraph is of considerable value in that it furnishes one more name in the list of calligraphers of the time of the Qutb Shāhis

¹ *Qur'an* Chapter LXXII verse 18

² The conjunctive *wa* in the text meaning 'and' is out of place here and in the first hemistich

³ See note 1 on p 61

⁴ Unfortunately the section on calligraphy relating to the Qutb Shāhis in Sherwani and Joshi *op cit* pp 419-21, is sketchy and does not do full justice to the subject It speaks of manuscripts and *Qil'at* of master calligraphers in Hyderabad Museums Libraries and Private collections and *Qil'at* prepared at the Qutb Shāhi court on the same text by different calligraphers but does not name even one of them (*ibid* p 421) It does not take note of such eminent calligraphers in the employ at the royal court or library whose calligraphical specimens have come down to us For example there is on display at the National Museum New Delhi a beautiful dated *Wāshi* (Calligraphical specimen) prepared in the Royal Library by Zaimu d Dīn Alī of the Qutb Shāhi court

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